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JOHN D. DOUGLAS.

SERMONS AND POETICAL REMAINS.







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JOHN D. DOUGLAS.

SERMONS AND POETICAL REMAINS,

WITH A

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

By EDWARD COYLE, L.F.P.S.G., L.S.A.,

AND

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY THE

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DEDICATION.



*To thee, the mother of that worthy son
Whose life these faulty pages may record,
To thee, now witnessing the victory won
By him, who more than conquered, lacking sword,
Save that which love might wield—the bloodless brand
Of deeds made deathless by a stainless hand,
Of words in highest wisdom, nobly grand—
Of thoughts that glowed with goodness, and which shone
As stars in the dark firmament: alone
To thee, brave one, whose sad and sonless heart
Bears well the stroke, praying amen, amen,
Till God shall give thee back, no more to part,
Thy son; to thee, I say, to thee again,
With tears, I dedicate my quiv'ring pen.*

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.



SHORTLY after the lamented death of Mr. Douglas, when the present Memorial Volume had been projected by some of his friends, it was suggested that I should write a few lines of preface to it. He was one of my most distinguished students, and I could not but have a hearty sympathy with the desire to do honour to his memory; but, while no words of mine were needed to bespeak a fitting reception for the book on the part of those who had personally known him, and who were looking forward to its publication with sorrowful interest, I had little reason to believe aught that I might say likely to reach or influence any considerable number of those to whom his name was that of a stranger. It was desirable, however, in view of one of the objects contemplated by the issue of the volume, to extend its appeal beyond the mere circle of personal friends; and under these circumstances it has been felt that there should be prefixed to it such a statement of the facts as to the earlier distinction and high promise of Mr. Douglas, as might seem fully to warrant the action of his friends in giving to the world—under all the disadvantages of posthumous publication—some specimens of his ordinary work.

The arrangements of the Divinity Hall here, which Mr. Douglas entered in the session of 1879-80 and attended during the two following sessions, brought him into earlier and longer contact, if not into closer relations, with myself than with his other teachers; and hence to

me falls the duty of placing on record the more salient facts of his career in the Hall. Well known previously to his fellow-students, he soon attracted my attention by his appearance, bearing, and work. It was the usage at that time that a portion of the prizes should be assigned in accordance with the judgment of the class as to the general standing and merits of the competitors, and that another portion should be awarded by the Professor according to the relative excellence of the work in the written examinations. In his first session Mr. Douglas thus gained by the votes of his fellow-students the first prize for general eminence, while the results of the examinations led me to award to him a similar honour. In his next session (1880-81) he received the second prize for general eminence and the second prize for written examinations; but he retained the same relative position at the head of the students of his own year, for in this case the two divisions of the Senior class (second and third year students) were at that time associated in examination and in the prize-lists, and the first prize, as might have been anticipated, went to a student who was by a year his senior. In the third session of his attendance he was again successful in carrying off the first prize for general eminence.

His position was equally distinguished in the class of Church History, where he gained in 1879-80 the first prize in the junior division, and in 1880-81 the first prize in the senior division, as well as a special prize for "an examination on the writings of the Apostolic Fathers."

In the class of Biblical Criticism he obtained the first prize of 1880-81 by the votes of the class, and the third prize for "essays and written examinations."

In his first session he wrote for me an essay on the "Place and Significance of Prophetism in Israel," which I have noted as "the best of those given in on the subject," and in the following session one on "Sacrifice under the Old Testament," which I have marked as "meriting the highest commendation."

These results, extending over different years and different fields of study, amply suffice to indicate the foremost place which he occupied among the students of his year in the judgment alike of his fellows and of his professors; and his dispositions rendered him not less esteemed than his gifts. It sometimes happens that high academic attainments and honours are not attended by other requisites essential for success in the practical work of life, but in the case of Mr. Douglas there can be no doubt that the striking success and acceptance of his ministry formed the fitting complement of his brilliant college career. It may be hoped that those who have had opportunity of following his course, whether as student or as pastor, will welcome such help as this volume supplies towards preserving him in remembrance; and that, imperfect as are the conditions under which its contents appear—without thought of preparation or touch of revision for such a purpose—they will furnish no unworthy glimpse of the methods and of the spirit in which he sought during his brief day of work to serve the Master in the Church.

WILLIAM P. DICKSON.

P R E F A C E.

IN presenting this Memorial Volume of the late Mr. Douglas to his many friends it may be superfluous to say anything by way of introduction. But as I am afraid that more has been expected than this volume may be found to supply, I feel that I owe it to the memory of my friend and to myself to make a short explanation.

First, as regards the Biography, the gathering of material has been a work of great difficulty. Though I have applied to numerous friends, I have not obtained such a collection of facts as would have enabled me to furnish a fuller sketch. Fortunately, it was my privilege to know Mr. Douglas intimately, and the want of information from other sources has not been so much felt on this account. Yet it would have been more satisfactory, had I been enabled to draw more fully from the recollections of other friends. I am, however, happy to say that several have helped me in this matter, by supplying me with many interesting incidents, and correcting others which had been imperfectly communicated.

The Verses which have been selected are given almost literally as Mr. Douglas wrote them. It was deemed best to give those pieces which most reflected the man himself, and doubtless his friends will approve of this course rather than of a more general presentation.

The Sermons, a part only of what he has left behind, can hardly be spoken of as selected. As a friend—a

clergyman—who kindly looked over the collection with a view to making a choice, said—“It is very difficult to select, they are so uniformly excellent.” I have therefore taken such as seemed best to illustrate some views of Christian life held by the preacher, on which he laid special stress, or as were suggested by particular associations connected with the occasion on which they were preached.

Amongst the gentlemen who have helped me I should mention the Rev. John Smith, M.A., B.D., Parish Minister, Partick; the Rev. John Barr Service, M.A., B.D., Parish Minister of Bolton, near Haddington; and the Rev. Joseph Rorke, U.P. Minister, Berwick-on-Tweed.

To William Wilson, Esq., J.P., ex-Preceptor of Hutchesons' Hospital, I am also much indebted. Not only has he taken upon himself the financial responsibility of this work, but in many other ways he has rendered ready and valuable help.

Lastly, though perhaps this acknowledgment should have been made first, I have been greatly assisted by the host of kind-hearted ladies, who were amongst the most enthusiastic of Mr. Douglas' admirers. To their exertions the success of the subscriptions for this volume is largely due.

EDWARD COYLE.

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BIOGRAPHY.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN DONALD DOUGLAS was born on the 31st July, 1854, in George Street, Glasgow. At the time of his birth his mother had been six months a widow, her husband having died from an attack of inflammation. Though left alone, and with small resources to fight life's battle, Mrs. Douglas succeeded by her energy in maintaining herself and her sons. Her husband, who belonged to a family of Argyleshire farmers near Oban, not caring for an agricultural life, and being of an active temperament, came to Glasgow and began business. A period of depression in trade shortly after he came to the city seriously taxed his resources; and the losses sustained by him, and the worry consequent upon them, were generally thought to have induced and aggravated the illness of which he died. He was a man remarkable for the gentleness of his disposition—shrewd, and highly intelligent. His strong affection for his wife was marked by those who were intimate with him, and when he passed away, it was not only with great sorrow, but with deep solicitude at the thought of leaving his young partner. At an early period of her widowhood a few friends who took an interest in orphan children and appreciated her qualities asked her to take charge of some, a labour of love which she heartily undertook, and accomplished with a kindly heart and much good sense, and for which, we believe, she has merited and received the grateful acknowledgments of many, now successful in the world, who

were under her care. In her widowhood Mrs. Douglas was greatly comforted by the child who had been sent to her, as if in return for a lost husband. The memories so dear to a young wife were treasured and embodied in the new object of her affections, who, by his cheering presence, greatly lightened the burden of her lonely life.

The days of John's boyhood were uneventful. Cared for by a devoted mother, he became, as he grew up, a favourite with all who knew him. His chubby face, regular features, beautiful dark eyes and hair, made him personally attractive; while his bright intelligence and affectionate disposition won for him an immediate entrance to the hearts of all. In early life the love for children, so marked in maturer years, was conspicuous, and drew forth the affection, especially of the little ones trained under his mother. The girls would vie with each other in the performance of kindly offices, while the boys would equally show their friendship by sharing in his youthful sports. He was looked up to by them as a natural leader when any more serious enterprise was engaging their attention. When very young the instinct of the future preacher showed itself by amateur attempts in the nursery. Here he would sing some child's hymn, sometimes helped by the others, and thereafter address his juvenile flock, who usually listened with gratified attention, till his mother and friends, who chanced to be listening unobserved, were led by some incongruity of incident to betray their presence, when the preacher would blushing collapse for the time.

One of the early privileges of his life was the possession of a brother older than himself. Willie, as he was called, was much attached to John, who in turn was wholly devoted to him. They were inseparable companions, and their hours of play were always spent together. Willie was of a mechanical turn of mind, and often during his juvenile operations the younger lad would stand by and admire the creations of the little mechanic, who was really very clever in making toy engines and the like. Their com-

panionship was drawn closer by the prolonged illness which ended in Willie's death. At the bedside of his invalid brother John would sit patiently, anticipating his little wants, and attending to him with a thoughtful devotedness remarkable in one so young. It is fresh in the memory of many who knew them how John ministered to his brother's wants, not only in material, but also in higher things. He would often sing, standing at his brother's sick-bed—

“Salvation and immortal praise
To our victorious King!
Let heaven and earth, and rocks and seas,
With glad hosannas ring.”

While the patient sufferer would look lovingly up to the little singer, as if he regarded his voice as coming from that heaven to which his young life was passing. The death of this brother was a great blow to the sensitive nature of John. Often would he wander alone, and sit at his brother's grave. On one of these occasions, when but a lad of fourteen, he brought a rose that had grown there home to his mother, and wrote the following simple, but expressive, lines:—

“The rose shall fade and die,
But, with the coming spring,
The rose shall rise to life again
And beauty to earth bring.

“And so did'st thou, my brother,
Though buried in thy grave,
Burst the frail bonds asunder,
For thy Saviour died to save.

“And on angel's wings descending,
From thy home in heaven above,
Shall bring thy weeping mother
The message, ‘God is Love.’

“Yes, for lovingly He gave thee,
And loving took away—
The flower, though blooming fair on earth,
Could last but for a day.

“So lovingly He took thee,
 And placed thee in the sky,
 In regions fair of purest bliss,
 Where thou can’st never die.”

The first school experience of John was under the instruction of a lady, who kept an infants’ school close to his mother’s house. Here, at four years of age, John was sent, often carried by some of the elder girls who were under his mother’s care. From thence he passed to St. Matthew’s Parish School, where he obtained a thorough training in elementary English education. His chief excellence in this school was in drawing, and for this he obtained a prize, of which, as coming all the way from London, the boy was justly proud. In other departments he reached a general excellence, and also won prizes. While at this school he was noted for his shyness, and began to manifest that love for books which became a passion in his after life. The religious spirit of the boy, already indicated, soon displayed itself in other forms. From the time that he was able to read he took a special pleasure in Bible stories, and early formed the habit of reading the Book before going to bed. During his school-days he was laid aside by a sharp illness, from which he soon recovered, and returned with renewed ardour to his books.

Several pleasing incidents of his summer holidays have been preserved. At these times, during the long illness of his brother, he would devote himself almost unremittingly to his service; and while at the coast would draw him about in a perambulator, and devise plans for his enjoyment. One of the most prominent features of his boyhood as well as of his whole life, was his devotion to his mother. It seemed as if his own happiness was bound up in hers. She was often assured of presents, that the extravagant mind of the boy would promise for her gratification. The kindly thoughtfulness of the lad early displayed itself. One summer, while at Corrie, in Arran, his mother sent him, with a favourite domestic, to get milk at a farm-house some distance along the shore. While they were still a

considerable way from their destination, a sudden storm arose, and the boy insisted on his companion waiting under the shelter of a rock until he should himself run, vessel in hand, and bring the milk. Thus passed away, in uneventful incident, the early days of his life. Notwithstanding the inauspicious circumstances in which it began—a humble home, and amidst plain surroundings—he grew up, under the care of his mother, already giving to those about him the token of the career before him.

“The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man’s the goud for a’ that.”

CHAPTER II.

SCHOOL-DAYS being ended in 1866, this promising youth entered at the age of twelve the well-known firm of Wilson, Matheson, & Co., Glassford Street, Glasgow. It has always been the rule of this old established house that their employees should begin with the most elementary duties. Accordingly, John took up work as a message boy. Having seldom gone elsewhere than to school from his mother's house, he often found himself perplexed in errands to the remoter streets of the big city, and more than once would make his way home to his mother with a feeling akin to despair over his undelivered parcels. The difficulty was soon ended, for volunteers were obtained who were always delighted to assist Johnnie in his troubles. He rapidly passed through the various stages of service in the packing-room and warehouse till at length he found himself in the more congenial atmosphere of the counting-house. Here his skill and facility in composition soon attracted the notice of the observant heads of the firm, and John was assigned an important post as corresponding clerk. For several years he continued to hold this office, and he discharged its responsible and difficult duties to the entire satisfaction of his employers. The work came to his fluent hand as more a pleasure than a task. His neat and beautiful handwriting, coupled with his command of appropriate expression, made him a model correspondent.

Shortly after his entry on work with Messrs. Wilson, Matheson, & Co., thoughts of preparing for the ministry dawned on him, but for a time he remained in suspense, being ever diffident of himself and of what he could do. At length, what had been at first an impracticable dream passed into the form of a solid purpose, and ultimately of

a fixed resolution. Sermons heard in church on Sundays seemed to be like chords drawing him on irresistibly to the work, and we find in his diary the following interesting entries:—

“ Sunday, July 17th, 1870.

“ And now another week has fled, and mingling with the regrets of the past rise the hopes of the future. O may I be indeed successful in redeeming the time. I heard two sermons preached to-day, one in the forenoon by the Rev. Mr. —, formerly missionary in our Church; the other by the Rev. Mr. —, present missionary. The first sermon was on the Parable of the Talents, and showed, however little the influence we had, if we used it well we would be rewarded proportionately with those who, though they did much, had greater influence, since he who had but two talents and gained other two was rewarded like him who had gained five. The afternoon discourse was from 1 Peter ii. 24, on the vicarious nature of the atonement, but it failed in eloquence or attractiveness. It is a truth we must all acknowledge, viz.:—The substitutionary nature of the Atonement, but is more powerful when habited in a poetic dress and set to music. I have since been considering Psalm first. We too often come short of what we anticipated, and this day hath not given to me the full and perfect rest and peace which I have felt before. True it is our harps remain too oft unstrung, and sin causes them to send forth dissonant notes, yet while I am now burying the dead past the future rises before me. O may I be led by the Spirit of God to spend it aright, and while I am allowed to take from the golden treasury of time another season of grace, may I be able when called to give an account, to do it with joy, and not with grief. May I take this portion of light from the great lamp, and may it be a light to me in the coming week—

“ ‘LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL-DOING, FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP IF WE FAINT NOT.’—GAL. vi. 9.”

“ Sunday, 24th July, 1870.

“ I have this day solemnly determined to devote myself to the Christian Ministry, and I pray God to help me in this, for our sufficiency alone cometh from Him. I am conscious that I have a great deal to learn ere I can do this. Yet the forms of departed great ones gather around me, and when I remember the difficulties

they had to contend with, my path appears comparatively easy. But, above all, I trust to the Providence of God, knowing what He willeth shall be done, and He who made the great mountain become a plain can also make me to overcome all difficulties. Yet if it be God's will that I am not to enter the sacred office, may I acquiesce, knowing what He willeth is best. I am conscious that I may serve God otherwise, yet I feel as if called to this, as if He who called Peter of old to be a fisher of men also called me. O may I be worthy of this vocation, and, having put my hand to the plough, may God keep me from turning back. I heard a sermon this forenoon on the Parable of the Woman who lost the Piece of Silver. Some of the thoughts on the analogy between the coin and the soul were very beautiful. The sermon was most excellent, and I felt as Thackeray is said to have done when reading 'Little Dorrit,' 'There is no use of me writing any more.' Our own missionary preached in the afternoon on the Parable of the Vineyard. Truly I may say that God has been good in awaking me unto such a high and holy object. For I feel that I was just beginning to flag. May He ever keep this desire in me, and enable me to pursue it aright. O may God guide me in the coming week and make me realise His presence more, for Jesus' sake.

“ ‘ AT EVENTIDE IT SHALL BE LIGHT.’ ”

A characteristic feature of the thoughtful clerk's life at this period was the assiduity with which he turned his spare time to good account. In the warehouse, if a few minutes of lawful leisure occurred, a book, for he always carried one with him, would be opened and some part of its contents greedily devoured. His skill in reading books, so as to extract the pith of them, was early apparent. Among his intimate friends the ease and rapidity with which he went through book after book, was the subject of frequent comment. His evening hours were assiduously employed. While others, occupied during the day as he was, would spend their evening leisure in walking or other outdoor amusement, he would be closeted at his studies, or, if, as sometimes happened, he walked with a friend, the occasion would be turned to account in discussing some

subject of recent thought or reading. Amongst his earliest and most valuable acquisitions was his mastery of Shorthand. Under a teacher he had lessons for six months, but afterwards perfecting himself by his own steady application he became a certificated teacher of Pitman's system, and was himself one of the most successful instructors in the art. The boy teacher (for he was little more than a lad when he began to teach classes) presented a striking contrast to some of his pupils, who were grey-bearded men. The Shorthand classes were carried on in connection with The Glasgow Young Men's Society for Religious Improvement, now the United Young Men's Christian Association. This society, among other benefits conferred by it, had educational classes in the evening, anticipating in this respect the action of our School Board. It was in these classes that the young teacher of Shorthand began the study of Latin and made his first acquaintance with Mathematics, a subject in which he took comparatively little interest, and consequently attained no special excellence. We can well recall our first meeting with him some seventeen years ago in the mathematical class-room. There was something very attractive in the face and features of the youth, and when we had come to know him, a closer intimacy more than confirmed the first impressions. The walk home that evening—for we both lived in the same district—was the first of a series, as pleasant as they were profitable, extending over a long term of years. Our ambitions were alike. Both were looking forward to the Ministry as their sphere of future work, and throughout the changes of years, eventful to us both, never did unkindly word or look pass between us.

Amongst the many good effects of the Young Men's Society none was more marked than that exercised by the Sabbath meetings. While but a lad John had joined one of the branches, for so the meetings of the society were called. It was held on Sabbath morning, in Cambridge Street. Here he made his first attempt at essay writing, and, with much trepidation, delivered his maiden effort. Subsequently he joined the meeting known as the George

Square Branch of the society, one of the largest and most successful in the connection. On Sabbath morning, at eight o'clock, about fifty young men, including Mr. Douglas, met to read essays, and discuss in a reverent spirit Scriptural topics. One who was afterwards an intimate friend of his first met him in this class. The occasion of their meeting presented him in a characteristic light. He was always known to take the weaker side. The subject of essay had been King Saul, and the essayist had been dealing rather hardly with the fallen monarch. When it came to Mr. Douglas' turn to criticise, he made a very happy little speech, in which he defended the unfortunate king from the severity of the strictures which the essayist had passed upon him, pointing out that most of us placed in a like position would probably have done no better, but worse, than Israel's first monarch. Annexed to this branch was a week-night literary class, in which Mr. Douglas often took part by leading off in a debate or reading a paper. In summer, when weather on Saturday afternoons was favourable, excursions to places of interest in the vicinity of Glasgow were arranged. Once we visited the ruins of Crookston Castle. We found the gates open, and, without fear of trespass, the company of youths trooped in to look at the crumbling remains of departed glory. We were not long within the enclosure, however, when we discovered our mistake. The keeper, who was with an excursion party that were having a pic-nic in the grounds, came up and demanded of us what we were doing there. Some of us made a brief excuse and quietly slipped out, but Douglas, who was last, and who felt that no moral wrong had been committed by our presence among the ruins, answered with patriotic spirit that we were "looking at a national monument." The keeper, unable to appreciate such a sentiment, angrily exclaimed, "*Naational moanuments, I'll naational moanument ye!*" and, suiting the action to the word, struck him on the ear with an egg that he had been carrying in his pocket. Great was the indignation of the company at this insult to one so popular, and

a council of war was held to discuss the advisability of retaliating in kind. It ended, however, in what was, doubtless, the best way; we considered that "discretion was the better part of valour," and, after emptying the vials of our collective wrath on the absent head of the offending keeper, we turned for home, resolving that we should not come back to a place where public spirit was so little appreciated. In addition to the morning meeting of which we have spoken, he attended, but for a short time, an evening meeting known as the Naismith Branch, and presided over by myself. Into the evangelistic work of the Young Men's Society he threw himself with hearty zeal, more especially into that of the Forenoon Sabbath School, held for years in 12 Trongate, and known as the Old Town Hall. Here the untrained children of Saltmarket, High Street, and Bridgegate were gathered in and taught the elementary truths of the Gospel, while some who had never been at school were instructed in reading. His sympathy with the poor, neglected children found practical expression in many ways.

Towards the end of his business life he joined the First Lanarkshire Volunteers. He was strongly imbued with the spirit of patriotism, and from a sense of duty, not less than from a feeling that the exercise would help his physical development, he heartily assumed the new character. There was, no doubt, some incongruity in the aspect of the thoughtful youth as he appeared in regimentals. When he was out firing at the ranges, the adjutant, who did not know him personally, was struck with his appearance. At target practice our hero was not specially distinguished. Sometimes he would make amusing allusions to the exploits of Mansie Waugh, and suggest comparisons between himself and that noteworthy personage. One fine Saturday we went together to the ranges. Firing at the three hundred yards distance, we were equally successful in striking the hillside against which the target rested, or, it might be, of shooting over it altogether, but the target itself suffered little at our hands.

In 1873, the training which we had been receiving in

classics not being what we desired in prospect of entering the University, we went together to a public institution for Greek and Latin. The morning hours, from seven to nine, were the only ones we could devote to the class, and I well recall how, in the dark, cold winter, our youthful love of sleep was sorely taxed by the effort at early rising. Still, with my friend, when books and lessons were concerned, the task was comparatively easy. Our teacher was somewhat peculiar. An ardent politician, it was not difficult, when the lesson for the day was not too well prepared, to divert the Latin lecture into a discourse on politics, and not seldom, we fear, was the ruse resorted to. One of our fellow-students, a man of about forty, who was endeavouring to make up for lost time by sustained application, but who was not able to keep pace with us, often came into collision with our teacher. A halt in our class-mate's speech, which increased his difficulty in mastering Latin, often made our irascible chief lose his temper, or resort to ridicule, after a fashion not soon to be forgotten. At such times the tact of Douglas would show itself by suggesting a question bearing on the lesson, or in some other ingenious way, he would come to the rescue of the unfortunate student without offending the teacher, with whom he was a great favourite. Ten years afterwards, when walking together at Bothwell, we chanced to meet our classical instructor of former days. His perplexed look, when we introduced ourselves as old pupils of his, is still before me. One of us jocularly remarked, as if to assist the old man's memory, "Don't you remember, he was the clever fellow and I was the dunce?" He replied, piercing us at the same time with his steel-grey eyes, "You were both clever enough if you had wrought harder." In the spring of 1874 we came under the tuition of the Rev. Mr. Edwards, an Aberdeen gentleman, who was about to proceed to India as a missionary. We spent a few months under his care, and enjoyed, not only the benefit of his knowledge of Latin, but also the privilege of his society. The connection soon deepened into friendship, and the day of his ordination to his sacred work

in St. George's Church was of great interest to us. As a small memento of our friendship, we made him a present of Dr. W. C. Smith's poem, "Olrig Grange," in which Mr. Douglas inscribed the following beautiful sonnet:—

“As oftimes travellers from some far-off shore
 Bear with them some memorial of their stay,
 That so, when sunny skies and hours are o'er,
 That keepsake, poor, may on them cast a ray
 From out the brightness of a vanished day.
 Even thus, we fondly hope, this nameless song,
 However far the traveller may stray,
 Like a sweet echo will our names prolong ;
 And as it held our converse for a time,
 When, like a river, it flowed full and free,
 So may the past speak forth in every line ;
 Even as the shell, far sundered from the sea,
 Doth still remember his abode most fair,
 And murmurs, as the ocean murmurs there.”

About this time Mr. Douglas was a most energetic member of the Young Men's Society for Religious Improvement. Mr. James Cleland Burns, a gentleman well known in our city, had offered to the Association the sum of £20, to be competed for in the form of essays, the subjects being the Public Libraries Act, and the Charity Organization Society. Both of these questions were then comparatively new to the people of Glasgow, and Mr. Burns was anxious to have them thoroughly discussed. Mr. Douglas entered the competition with quiet, but well-sustained effort. He wrote on both subjects, and won the first prize by his essay on the Libraries Act, and the second in the other competition. His paper on the former of these subjects was justly regarded as one of the best contributions to its discussion, and was afterwards published. Again Mr. Burns offered prizes for the best essays on the Gothenburg Licensing System, and again Mr. Douglas carried off the first prize. The night on which the prizes were presented for the Public Libraries Act, and Charity

Organization Society, was an eventful one in his life. The occasion was the Jubilee Soiree of the Young Men's Society. In the chair sat the late Mr. Graham, then M.P. for the city, and on the platform was a company, embracing some of the best of Glasgow's citizens. In the course of the evening we all stood and sang a Jubilee Hymn, written by our friend for this special occasion:—

“ O Thou, whose hand paternal,
Through all the changing years,
Hast led us ever onward,
Dispelling darkening fears,
Around Thy throne of glory
Our song this night we'd raise ;
Thee, Father, Son, and Spirit,
Unitedly would praise.

“ We thank Thee for the brightness
Shed o'er us from above,
Thy Spirit's cheering presence,
Thy Son's exceeding love.
O, let our glad hosannas
Rise upward to the skies,
As from Thine ancient altars,
The grateful sacrifice.

“ We thank Thee for the loved ones,
Once with us, now no more,
Who've crossed the narrow river,
And found the happy shore ;
Their works are ever with us,
Their lives have lasting speech,
And call us upward, onward !
To their estate to reach.

“ The years lie long before us,
We lift our hearts to Thee ;
O ! grant us Thy salvation,
Let us Thy mercy see.
Our God, our hope for ever,
O ! guide us, and defend ;
As in the past, be with us,
On even to the end.”

Such public acknowledgment in various forms might well have turned the head of one so young, but in nothing did Mr. Douglas show to better advantage than in the modesty and sense with which he received his honours. It was about this time that he attended Dr. Wylie's Anti-Popery Class, held in Holmhead Street, on Saturday evenings, during the winter. This class numbered among its members graduates in Arts and students of Divinity, some of these among the best of the University. It was quite usual for some distinguished graduate to carry off the first prize of £10. Mr. Douglas had not attended any college classes at this time, although preparing for them, but was still engaged in business. To the astonishment of his class-fellows, he carried off the first prize—an achievement which he repeated the following year. Such a feat had not been known before in connection with the class.

One of his favourite enjoyments was an evening walk. Our homes were near to the well-known Glasgow Green, and many an evening, in the quiet moonlight, would we wander by the banks of the winding river, while the plans for the coming time were eagerly discussed, and the heroes of history passed in review. Nothing more captivated the mind of Mr. Douglas than the fame of the great preachers of the Ancient Church. Eloquence in any form had a special charm for him, and the utterances of Augustine, Chrysostom, and St. Bernard were treasured in his memory and quoted with delight. He took pleasure in the musical flow and roll of some of the Latin hymns, and would often quote, translate, and comment upon them. His intense love of music drew him to some churches which he might not otherwise have visited. On the Sabbath evenings he often went to Dr. Pulsford's church, drawn by the double attraction of the music and the discourse. Dr. Pulsford was ever a favourite with him, on account of his mysticism and his deep spirituality. The Cathedral was also a frequent resort. Many a time would he wander, having gone a little earlier for the purpose, among the magnificent pillars, and admire the marvellous skill that could rear such a

glorious pile of masonry. St. Andrew's Church (Dr. Robertson's), contiguous to his home, was also frequently visited. The masculine vigour and shrewd common-sense of the preacher, Dr. Frederick Lockhart Robertson, made the service both pleasant and profitable. His ideal preacher, however, was then, as he remained to the end, Dr. Caird. On every occasion when it was possible he sat listening in rapt admiration at the feet of this master of pulpit eloquence. An incident which occurred before he went to college illustrates the delight which he took in this great preacher's ministry. There was to be a service in the University Chapel, and the students were only admitted by ticket. He was not then himself a student, but knowing one who had promised to him his matriculation ticket for the occasion, he quietly awaited his arrival at the college gate. The student failed to appear, much to Mr. Douglas' annoyance. Fortunately, another friend was found who obliged him with the use of his ticket. A notable incident on that occasion was the fact that, just when the preacher had introduced Goethe's dying words, "Light, more light," the gas, which till then had been lowered, instantly responded to the preacher's call.

CHAPTER III.

THE time had now come when Mr. Douglas was to begin that course at college to which he had so long looked forward. With characteristic caution he sought to combine in the first session study and business. The Junior Humanity was the only class he took in the winters of 1874-75. It met at the early hour of eight, and was over at nine, and, through the kindness of Messrs. Wilson, Matheson, & Company, he was enabled to retain his situation throughout that winter and the following summer. His devotion to study, if possible, increased by his attendance at college. He seemed at once to catch the spirit of enthusiasm engendered by university life, and the ennobling stimulus of its time-honoured traditions. He linked himself as a loyal son to a new mother, and felt a genuine pride in his relationship to what he was fond of designating as his *Alma Mater*. He often talked of the famous names connected with its Chairs, and the illustrious succession of its Lord Rectors. Usually he would sit till far on in the night or early morning alone in his little study, conning his grammar or finding his way through some perplexity of construction or translation. Rising at half-past six, for he had a walk of about three miles to college, his hours of sleep were too limited; still he would speak of himself as one who slept too long. Many little plans would he try by which he might steal from the night the desired hours of study. He usually sat when at his books in an old-fashioned arm-chair. Once or twice he remained in his chair wrapt up in a blanket, endeavouring by two or three hours of sleep to supply the wants of the day. We need hardly say that the plan was a failure. Again he would tie one of his hands to the bedpost, that when he attempted to turn in sleep the pulling of the cord might awaken him.

It was during this session at college that the first election of Mr. Disraeli to the Lord Rector's chair took place. Mr. Douglas, who had early espoused the cause of Conservatism, threw himself into the heat of the contest with great enthusiasm. The meetings of Conservative students for promoting the candidature of one whom our friend regarded with unbounded admiration were faithfully attended, and by his voice and pen he contributed to the return of the illustrious statesman. Among his literary efforts made at this time is the following sonnet addressed to Mr. Disraeli:—

“ Praise to thy name, illustrious chief,
 Were praise not vain offered at such a shrine,
 Like wild excess of sweet'ning nectar'd wine,
 Painting the rose or gilding blooming leaf!
 Long shall thy work survive thee, and thy name
 Be in the years to come our children's boast;
 And with the great and noble, with that host
 Of deathless names enrolled in book of Fame,
 Thou shalt abide revered of loyal men,
 Though calumny, detractive eye and rude,
 Swaying the mind of a base multitude,
 Assail thy greatness with envenomed pen:
 Thou art above it, far as is the sun
 Shining serene with light of duty done.”

At the great meeting held in the City Hall in November, 1873, when Mr. Disraeli delivered what many competent authorities consider his greatest political oration, Mr. Douglas was present. We sat together near the reporters, and were both amused and delighted with the whole proceedings. The amusement was supplied in part by the homely chairman, Mr. Baird of Cambusdoon, whose burly figure presented a striking contrast to the elegant presence of the great statesman; and whose quaint vernacular was all the more entertaining as a prelude to the eloquence that followed. Mr. Douglas was very much struck, amongst other things, with the epithet used by the chairman in describing Mr. Disraeli as a man of “*consoomate ability*.” Often would he

afterwards speak of the scene as the most striking he had been privileged to witness. The tall, spare figure bent forward in graceful attitude reminding one of some model of classic Grecian art; that wondrous face so powerful in expression and formed so exquisitely; those eyes that sparkled with the fire of the highest oratory; and that great brow crowned with these clustering curls, so familiar to all who knew him, made a picture unique in its kind; while the flowing sentences, conveying with musical cadence the measured thoughts of the statesman, completed the effect.

In the prospect of a second session Mr. Douglas resigned his post in Messrs. Wilson, Matheson, & Co.'s. The first session was an experiment, and now that he was about to set himself with all his heart to the work of preparation for the ministry, he felt that he must give an undivided attention to his studies. The many friends that he had made in the warehouse resolved not to let him go without some token of their regard. A goodly sum was subscribed, and the question as to what might be the best gift was eagerly discussed. There were various suggestions, but it was pointed out that the most appropriate gift would be books, and the argument was clinched by some one saying that if they gave him anything else he would only sell it and buy books. So it was arranged, and on an autumn evening in 1875 his warehouse friends met to bid him a kindly farewell. One of the firm occupied the chair, and made the presentation in a few graceful words.

In the winter of 1875-76 Mr. Douglas took the senior Humanity and Greek classes. He worked with his customary diligence, and, though suffering from the disadvantage of not having had an early classical training, succeeded in carrying off one of the Latin prizes. In this part of his curriculum, however, while acquitting himself well, he did not reach that high excellence attained by him in other departments. In the classes which test most the native powers of a man, and which depend less on the cultivation of youthful memory, he found his congenial sphere. Unfortunately, when he took the Moral Philosophy class, he

had an illness which prevented him from regularly attending; but, as this did not occur till the session was well advanced, he had time to show what he could do. In the few examinations at which he appeared he stood in the first class, and, as Professor Caird informed me, "he would doubtless have been a prizeman had he been able to attend." In the Logic class he attained high distinction, being on more than one occasion first in "the essays" over the whole class. A paper by him on the Imagination was commented on by the professor in terms of the highest praise.

At the end of his Arts course he was again seized with illness. While at the coast in the summer, acting as tutor in a gentleman's family, he walked a considerable distance to see some friends from Glasgow staying there. The day was sultry, and the walk was relieved neither by rest nor by refreshment. The effort was too much for him, and a blood-vessel gave way internally, which induced Hæmoptysis. A few weeks of prostration followed, during which he was confined to bed. Several physicians saw him, among others the late Dr. Scott Orr, who had known him from childhood, and as there was no organic disease discoverable, his recovery, though slow, was complete. During his convalescence he spent several weeks at Bothwell, whither I accompanied him to relieve the tedium of his stay. When the weather was good we had most enjoyable walks along the banks of the Clyde, which here are very beautiful, or we sat among the historic ruins of the ancient Castle, musing over its departed glory. It was this illness that hindered Mr. Douglas from presenting himself for examination with a view to the Arts degree.

The following touching letter written to his mother about a year afterwards will be read with interest :—

"Sabbath Evening, 21st November, 1880.

"I do not know that I have any reason to apprehend death as near, but I wish, in case I might die suddenly, or without having the opportunity of speaking to her, to say these last words of comfort and farewell to my dear mother. I feel that it will be a

comfort to her, and the knowledge that I have written them here for her will be, and now is, a comfort to me.

“ In my illness, now fourteen months ago, when I thought that I might possibly die, what made the thought of death so painful to me was the fear of the grief it would be to my mother. God, in His great mercy, spared me then; but in case death might come on me unawares, I want to say these words, which will help you, my dear mother, not to grieve—which will, I hope, turn your grief into joy. For, my dear mother, I can humbly say that I have learned to look on death without fear.

“ I wish to live, if it be God’s will, and especially if I be strong enough to support you; but I am learning to know and believe that what God sends is always best, and if He sends death to me, it is best for me, and for you all. And I die most firmly and humbly trusting in the infinite goodness of God, our Heavenly Father—in the love and all-saving grace of our blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ—and in the all-comforting power of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

“ I know that there is very much in my past life that I would wish undone, and that I have wasted many opportunities for good, ‘ But, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ I have not spoken with you, my dear mother, on these things, because I think they should lie between ourselves and God. I know you have had little time for meditation on them. I had fondly hoped one day to have given you a quiet and peaceful home, but if it be not granted to me, I hope that what money I leave behind (for I always thought of it, my dear mother, as yours, which, indeed, it is), with what money you have of your own, will help you and Mr. Smith to retire, if not from work altogether, at least into some peaceful employment. But remember, my dear mother, that God our Father sympathises with us in the trials and difficulties of our situation, and will not lay on us more than we can bear. ‘ Cast your burden on Him,’ assured that He careth for you. To His love and care (which never fail), and to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I commend you. In bidding you farewell I rejoice, and let this rejoice you too, that it is only for a while. We shall meet again, ‘ Where there is no parting, neither sorrow nor tears.’ I thank you, my dear, dear mother, for all your love and care of me. I wish I could have been of more use

to you, and have given you less trouble. But God will reward you; and, remember, He loves you far more than ever you loved me, and it is those whom He loves that He chastens. Give my kind love to Mr. Smith,* and thank him for all his kindness to me, and all his kindness to you. May you be happy in each other, and may God bless and guide you. Give my kind love to all my dear friends, especially to Coyle† and Kennedy.‡ Thank them for all their kindness to me, and tell them I hope we shall all meet in Heaven. God has been very good to me all my life long, not only in giving me your kind love, but also in keeping me from evil companions, and giving me so many kind friends. I had hoped to have lived and served our Lord in the Church on earth, but I trust to be found worthy to serve Him in the Church above. And remember, my dear mother, that we are ‘All one in Christ Jesus our Lord.’

“‘I am the resurrection and the life’ (saith Christ); ‘he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in Me, shall never die.’—*John xi. 25-26.*

“‘Let not your heart be troubled. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.’—*John xiv. 1-2.*

“‘Sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.’—*1 Thes. iv. 13-14.*

“‘They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.’—*Rev. vii. 16-17.*

“‘And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain.’—*Rev. xxi. 4.*

“My last words, my dear mother, are, I die in peace, and in the sure hope that in God’s good time you and my other friends will come to meet me, as I now believe I go to meet Willie and those whom I knew here and who have ‘gone before.’ Be sure you do not grieve for me; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your heart for ever, through Christ our Saviour. Amen.

“Farewell for a little while.

“‘’Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse,
How grows in Paradise our store.’

—*Christian Year.*”

* Mr. Douglas’s stepfather.

† The biographer.

‡ The Parish Minister of Portpatrick.

In the Divinity course, which was even more congenial to him than that of Arts, the time passed rapidly. During this period he formed some of his warmest friendships. Among his fellow-students were several who now hold good positions in the Church, and who will recall with pleasure the recollections of these friendly days. His breadth of sympathy brought him into contact with all classes of students. He was the friend, and, so far as he could, the helper of the dull and commonplace; while with the more gifted, like himself, he was a special favourite. One friend, and one who made Mr. Douglas a shelter in time of trouble, was remarkable for his fitfulness. He found college life very irksome, but his relatives desired to make him a minister, for which office he had little aptitude. He would be absent one day and present another, the time of attendance being given to the writing of apologies for days of absence, instead of following the lecturer. On this youth Mr. Douglas was known to bestow much sympathy and friendly consideration. With the diligent and talented Mr. Douglas found himself at once in his proper sphere. His modesty precluded any tendency to jealousy; never once was he known to boast. An incident, not of college life but of earlier days, which well illustrates this may here be mentioned. About the year 1873 a class for theological study was taught by Mr. James Orr (now Dr. Orr, U.P. minister of Hawick, then a brilliant young licentiate awaiting a church). It was in connection with the Young Men's Society. Students of divinity attended it, and others of considerable talent and culture. Mr. Douglas was a keen competitor in the examinations, the results of which were not allowed to be known till the end of the session. One evening in early spring, a number of students were walking home together, among them Mr. Douglas, and—as was very natural—the conversation turned on the possible issue of the competition. One youth ventured to suggest that in one of the examinations he would be found first, though he admitted that in another Mr. Douglas might lead. The latter contented himself by quietly observing

that they had better wait till the examiner declared the results. The time came, and it was announced, to the gratification of his friends, that in all the examinations Mr. Douglas held the first place.

Throughout the years of his Divinity course Mr. Douglas sustained a brilliant part. In every class except Hebrew he found himself in the place of honour, and when he was licensed it was the opinion of his professors that he had no superior among the men of his year. With one who is now an honoured minister of the Church, Mr. Douglas frequently competed for the first place; now one would take the lead, then the other, and again they would be bracketed as equal. None of the students carried away with them more hearty good wishes from their professors. The testimonials which, when a candidate for churches, he procured aptly show this; and the kindly relations which ever after subsisted between him and his former teachers were a standing proof, if such were needed, of the deep regard in which they held him. As one of his old class-mates said, when speaking of him—“He was so completely the gentleman that it would be impossible not to respect him at first sight, and not to love him when known.” His life was a happy illustration of the couplet often quoted by him from his favourite poet, Tennyson—

“And thus he bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman.”

In his college days, when the end of the session came, and with it the list of prizes, it was very pleasing to witness the modest gratification with which he would carry the tokens of his triumph home to his mother. He would lay them out before her on the table, and, with sparkling eye and blithesome voice, would put his arm round her neck and kiss her, while saying that these were all for her. A gentleman who was intimately acquainted with him for many years tells us that, on one occasion when he had unexpectedly gained a money prize, he went at once to look out some specimens of material for ladies' dress from which his mother might make her selection, to be paid for

out of his prize-money. In the latter days of his student life, Mr. Douglas spent a summer at Lochranza, Arran, in connection with the Church of Scotland Mission Station. Here in the quaint little church he ministered from week to week, when Glasgow visitors brought to that sparsely-inhabited part of the Western Highlands a temporary increase to its population. Among the people he visited diligently, and many even of the "stiff Free Kirkers," as they were reputed, would drop in occasionally to hear one whom they were pleased to call the young evangelical minister. His abode was quietly situated on the side of a hill, and his aged, but amiable, landlady was as "Hielan'" as her native heather. She regarded her inmate with what seemed a mingling of superstition and reverence, and ministered to his wants with an almost embarrassing profusion of civility.

Along the shore of that sheltered loch he would often spend the fine afternoon, book in hand, and sometimes he might be seen similarly occupied on the side of one of the neighbouring hills.

One morning in July we went out early to combine the pleasure of reading with the enjoyment of the bracing air. A ripple was on the water of the loch, and a small fishing smack, manned by four brothers, was gliding into the little harbour. The sky suddenly changed its bright aspect, and clouds rapidly gathered. From the hills there came a rush of wind; the sea roughened, and the man at the helm, unequal to cope with the fickle blast which seemed to blow from various points, allowed the boat to turn, so that a broadside, if we may so speak, caught the little craft, upset her, and left the four men struggling in the water. The scene, as witnessed from the shore, baffles description. The aged parents of the men, with their wives and sisters, had been watching them coming in, and had seen what had happened; many others saw it also. In a moment a wild shriek arose, and all rushed to the shore. A boat was quickly manned and rowed out, the distance from the beach not being more than a few hundred yards. Soon the struggling

men were got into the boat, and the sturdy rowers swiftly hurried them to their home, which was not far from the place of landing, and on the other side of the Loch from where Mr. Douglas resided.. With all haste he, along with his companion, who was then a medical student, went round to see what help might be rendered. The kindness shown by him on that occasion made a lasting impression. While his friend saw to the treatment of the soaked and shivering men, he spoke words of comfort to the anxious parents who, with natural instinct, dreaded the consequences of the immersion. Fortunately, three of the men were little the worse ; the fourth, who was delicate, had an attack of congestion of the lungs, from which he slowly recovered.

One night we remember a walk of two miles with him, in the drenching rain, to see a poor fisherman's child, who was reported ill, and to whom he desired to bring help at once. Mr. Douglas urged his reluctant friend to go with him. The little sufferer was found needing more a mother's care than a doctor's prescription; but such advice as was fitting was given, supplemented by my friend's kindly word. One of the characters of the place, who was a strange mixture of simplicity and shrewdness, held Mr. Douglas in much esteem, and when they met, the Highlander was sure to enter on a long chat, and, quite unsolicited, would inform the young minister all about the new arrivals and their church connections. One of his peculiarities was to know the Glasgow residences of the visitors. But Mr. Douglas, who had learned from others that he had a habit of going to the city and renewing acquaintance with friends who had been unwisely communicative, exercised a judicious silence, though often hard pressed for the secret. Here Mr. Douglas formed many valued friendships with people of other denominations. One old gentleman, who had been staying there during the summer, a highly respected United Presbyterian elder in Glasgow, became very much attached to him. This new acquaintance was quite an acquisition, especially in such a place. Though he had been assiduously engaged in business, he was a great lover

of books, and had read not a few of the best. His conversation, though homely, was highly intelligent, and ever after a sincere friendship subsisted between them. Mr. Douglas' mother visited him frequently in this place, and great were the preparations made for the due reception and befitting comfort of one to whom he was throughout life so devotedly attached. The following is the only letter which has come to our hands of the many written at Lochranza. It was written to a friend of his mother's, one who had nursed him when a child:—

“Lochranza, Arran, 2nd August.

“Dear J——,

“I was very glad to receive a letter from you, and to hear that you are well and liking your change to Crieff. I am glad to say I am liking my stay here very much, and my health is keeping excellent. I think a great deal of Lochranza. It is very pretty, and is bracing, and there is always something fresh about the sea. I have had some very nice excursions here. I was down at the south end of Arran, preaching for the parish minister of Kilmorie. He was up here preaching in my place. His parish is very nice, and I stayed nearly a week at the Manse, and found them very pleasant people. My church is doing about as well as could be expected. We have a pretty fair attendance of visitors, but as our church is very uncomfortable, while the Free Church is very nice, we are at a great disadvantage. However, I don't put myself about for that. I try to do my duty as well as I can in preaching, &c., but if the people go to the more comfortable church I don't blame them, and I don't think it matters which they go to. I noticed Dr. — death, about which you speak. You know, I suppose, my mother had no great liking for him. But there is an old Latin proverb which says, ‘Think nothing of the dead but good,’ and while I think he acted shabbily at times, yet even the best of us trip sometimes, and I believe, on the whole, he was a good man. Hoping you will continue to enjoy your stay, and that we will have good weather,

“I am, with best wishes,

“Sincerely yours,

“JOHN D. DOUGLAS.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE parish of Kilmun, where Mr. Douglas began his labours as a minister, forms an extensive tract of country, stretching from Loch Long half-way across the district of Cowal. It is a mass of hills, intersected by a few glens. From the head of the Holy Loch, the valley of the Echaig runs directly north, dividing the parish into two. This glen forms a curious depression between the hills, and reaches to within a short distance of Loch Fyne, indicating that probably in some distant era the Holy Loch reached much further inland than it does now. Near the shores of the loch the valley joins Glen Masson, and Glen Lean on the western side; while a few miles further up, Glen Finnart, opposite, running at right angles to the course of the river, extends from Loch Eck to Loch Long. These solitary glens hardly have a human habitation, if we except Glen Lean, where the powder mills, once in operation there, have gathered round them a small village. The shore along Loch Eck forms a solitary stretch, with only the little way-side inn, the frequent resort of fishers who come here in summer, while on the other side of the loch may be seen small white farm-houses nestling on the hill-side. At the small farm of Rashfield, about two miles from Kilmun, there is a curious survival of what was formerly not uncommon in Scotland. The farm is held by several families who till the land together, and when harvest comes divide the produce by lot. One might suppose that jealousy or greed would interfere with the common labour and the sharing of the produce, but the arrangement works well, and the families live in harmony and comparative comfort. This little old-fashioned hamlet stands near the centre of the glen, and forms a picturesque and striking contrast to the stately houses a little way off.



J. & R. Annan

KILMUN PARISH CHURCH

The village of Kilmun itself stands near the head of the Holy Loch, and on its eastern shore. The crofters and fishermen of former days are gone, and the village depends almost entirely on its summer visitors. It consists of one long row of houses, following the windings of the shore. At the upper end of the village stands the church, on a gentle elevation. The approach to it is formed by an avenue of stately trees, and close beside the modern building are the remains of an ancient tower. This ruin is all that is left of what was once a flourishing ecclesiastical institution. In close proximity to the church is the burial place of the house of Argyle.*

The position which an assistant holds in Kilmun is exceptional. Owing to the geographical features of the two parishes—their separation by a loch about a mile broad—it is impossible for the minister resident in Dunoon to exercise due supervision over both, so that, except when he appears once a fortnight in the pulpit, the care of Kilmun is left almost entirely in the hands of the assistant. This arrangement, while involving greater responsibility, also affords a better opportunity than is usually given to

* This historic spot has gathered round it many interesting reminiscences. One of these we may record, as it was often humorously alluded to by our departed friend. About a hundred years ago, a well-known Glasgow gentleman, afflicted with jaundice, came down to sojourn at the little inn. While enjoying this pleasant retreat, some of Neptune's sons, who had possibly been at the Lazaretto on the opposite shore, found their way to the same resting place. They were rather noisy inmates, and disturbed the repose of the invalid. Unwilling to leave, he called the landlord, and requested him to find some place where he might sleep. After some thought, the puzzled landlord replied "There is no place—unless you go up beside the dukes." "Well," said the old gentleman, nothing affrighted, "if you make it comfortable, I have no objection." At midnight, the roving tars, strolling along the shore, bent on fun, espied the church bell hanging on a tree in the graveyard. With frolicsome glee they set it a-ringing, little dreaming that living mortal was near. The sleeper, awakened by the noise, was seen springing forth from the ducal mausoleum, and was at once supposed to be a visitor from the other world. One sailor fainted, while the other two took to flight, our hero following as fast as he could. The terrified men arrived at the inn, panting and breathless, and were recounting their story to the astonished landlord, when the object of their dread appeared. On learning he was taken for a ghost, he laughed—and laughed so—that he was cured of the jaundice.

assistants for preparation in prospect of a full parochial charge.

At the time of his license, in the early summer of 1882, Mr. Douglas was appointed assistant to the united parishes of Dunoon and Kilmun. He entered upon his new duties with ardour, and with the firm resolve that the work should not suffer for lack of diligence.

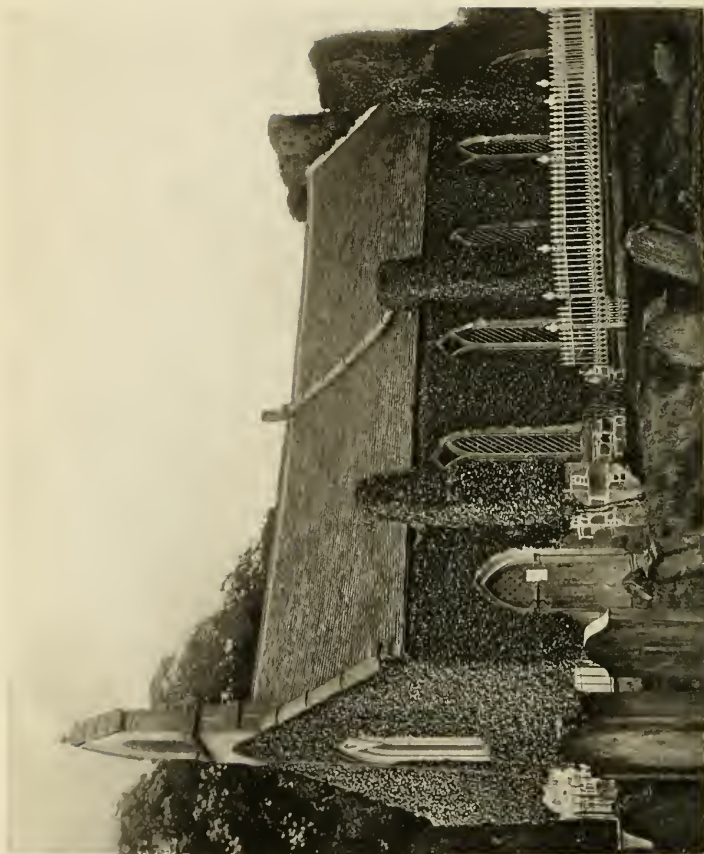
Mr. Douglas laboured for fifteen months in Kilmun, and notwithstanding the shortness of his ministry, made a lasting impression. His genial manner won easy access to all classes, some of his warmest friends and admirers being members of other denominations. During the winter he spent at the sea-side he combined with the minister of Strone in holding a joint prayer-meeting, and in various other ways he united in efforts with this friend for carrying on the work of their respective parishes. At Benmore (Mr. Duncan's) he conducted alternately with the Free Church minister a fortnightly prayer meeting, and thus happily illustrated, what he often publicly declared, that he could see no proper reason why the ministers of the various evangelical denominations could not heartily co-operate in the work of the Church. In the pastoral part of his duties he was singularly successful, and in one or two noteworthy incidents his labours were followed by much good. An aged couple, long resident in the parish, unable to attend Church, received special attention. The husband was seized with a lingering illness, which ended in his death, and during the long course of suffering, Mr. Douglas proved himself a helper in time of trouble. Daily would he sit at the bedside of the dying man, reading the Scriptures, imparting judicious counsel, or leading in devotion, and such was the power that the young clergyman had obtained over the afflicted one, that the old man would long for the pastoral call, and wish it extended when made. After his death, the gratitude of the widow was fittingly indicated in the following manner. One day, as Mr. Douglas was about to visit Glasgow, he dropped in, on his way, to give a word of condolence. The old lady received him

gladly, and going to a drawer, brought out the gold watch of her late husband, asking him if he would take it to the city, and have it repaired. It is unnecessary to say that he willingly undertook to do so. On his return, he brought it back with him, and called on his way home to leave it with its owner. She asked him the charge, and paid him, then joining the watch to the chain, just as they had been worn by her husband, she put the latter round his neck, requesting him to wear them for her sake, and remarked, "You have been to me like a son." In a letter written to a friend at the time of this lady's death, who did not long survive her husband, Mr. Douglas remarks, "I shall ever remember Mrs. ——'s kindness, and the lessons I received from her patience and faith." The following incidents also illustrate the loving nature of his work:—A poor woman of eighty had a son who had been absent for many years. Returning to the parish, he refused to contribute to her support. The Parochial Board had given her an allowance during her son's absence, but on his return they discontinued it, and she was left to starve, and had it not been for the charity of some considerate neighbours, would probably have done so. Mr. Douglas exerted himself on her behalf, and went to Dunoon to use his influence with a member of the Board who was known to him. The result was that the poor creature got back the small sum, and was allowed to end her days without knowing actual want. Her gratitude was great; whenever she spoke of Mr. Douglas her eyes would fill with tears. One Saturday afternoon, during the Glasgow Fair Holidays, some of the city excursionists, who were visiting the place, and had become tipsy, were about to fight. Several of the residents, not accustomed to such encounters in their quiet little village, were standing by, interested spectators of the scene. Mr. Douglas, who had been close at hand, stepped forward, touched the arm of one of the would-be combatants, and saying a soft word, instantly put a stop to the proceedings. The onlookers, knowing their minister, and being ashamed at his finding them ready to look on such folly, slunk quietly away.

At a little distance from the shore there were a number of desolate houses, which had at one time been occupied by workers in the powder mills already alluded to. Here there lived a number of the very poor of the place, who found the no-rent privilege a sufficient attraction for remaining in these homeless habitations. Mr. Douglas visited these poor ones frequently, giving them of his slender substance, as well as pointing them to the home in heaven. While thus going about doing good, his life was often varied by the hospitality of his parishioners. There are very warm hearts in this little sea-side village, and when the duties of the day were done, our friend would make his way into one of the many homes that were ever ready to receive him. His conversational powers were of the highest order, and not less for his personal worth than for his agreeable company, he found every door open to him.

The effect of this brief ministry it would be difficult to estimate. Never sensational, he, by quiet but powerful influence, made his way into the affections of the people, and when he left to go to Foulden, he carried away with him the love and good wishes of all. His Bible-class at Kilmun presented him with an appropriate tribute of their affection, and parents reserved their offspring, born after he left, for baptism at his hands.

So much was he attached to his friends in his first parish, that he often spent his holidays amongst them, generally taking up his residence at Woodside, Strone; and among other friendships formed during his visits there was the privilege of becoming acquainted with Dr. Hutcheson Stirling, the Philosopher, whose writings he greatly admired, and the honour of knowing whom he highly esteemed.



F. & R. Annan

FOULDEN PARISH CHURCH

CHAPTER V.

THE scene now changes to Foulden, a peaceful and picturesque parish in the south of Scotland. The clean appearance of the village, with its one long street of well-built houses, and the peaceful beauty of the whole scene command the attention of every visitor. The little church, covered with ivy, and the village churchyard, overgrown with grass, are of special interest to the antiquarian and historian. In Foulden Parish Church (not the present building, but an earlier one) the commissioners of the English Queen met the representatives of the Scottish people, to make amends for the execution of Mary Queen of Scots. This, in itself, endows the locality with an unfailing interest.

The churchyard is crowded with moss-covered grave-stones, each telling its own short story. Around few, however, gather such an interest as that of which the following is a copy:—

“Heir lyeth ane honorabil man, Georg Ramsay, in Fulden Bastel, who departed 4 Jan., 1692, and of his age 84.

“Fyfe fostring peace me bred,
 From thence the Merce me cald,
 The Merce to Mars’s lavis led,
 To byde his battels bald.
 Weried with yares and sore opprest.
 Death gave to Mars the foyl,
 And now I have more quyet rest
 Than in my native soyl.
 Fyfe, Merce, Mars, Mort, these fatal four,
 Al hafl my dayes hes dreven our.”

Even further back than this historic stone can we trace the existence of this ancient parish. At the time when the dispute between Bruce and Balliol about the Scottish Crown disturbed the national peace, Foulden must have

been of some importance, as the name of its priest is found in one of the state records. The whole country round is one great battlefield, upon which the bloody contests of the Scotch and English were fought. Not far from Foulden is the historic Halidon Hill, and not many miles away lies the black field of Flodden, while here and there, scattered all over the country, are spots made famous by deeds of valour.

On Monday, 21st March, 1883, Mr. Douglas was elected to be the Minister of this Parish. With this appointment, he gained the goal of his ambition, for now he was to enter upon the duties and responsibilities of a Parish Minister.

On Wednesday, 9th May, the ordination and induction took place. Many of Mr. Douglas' Glasgow friends, including several young clergymen, old class-mates, were present. The little church was well filled, and the sermon was preached by the Rev. Macduff Simpson, who delivered an eloquent discourse. Several of the Glasgow and local Ministers were present and assisted in the ordination. The usual presentation on such occasions, of a gown and books, was made. We are happy at being able to give the very appropriate reply made by Mr. Douglas on this occasion. Having donned the robe, he said, "that he had to thank them heartily for their very kind gift. He should be without all feeling, and without any reverence, if he were not very much impressed by the solemn services of that day, and by the fact, that he had now been admitted to be a Pastor of the Church of Christ, and a Minister of the Church of Scotland. He felt very deeply, that on entering on this office, he was undertaking a duty which would demand his utmost efforts, in order to discharge it well and faithfully. It was, as his brother in the Presbytery had charged him, a most solemn and serious office which he had now undertaken, and it was one which he felt he would be quite unable to perform, or the responsibilities of which he would be unable to bear, unless he felt, as his other brother in the Presbytery, who had so ably and so eloquently preached, had told them, that in this as in all things

there was help for him, as for all of them, from a source higher and better than any human aid could be. But while he humbly trusted that in all his efforts there, he should look to the aid with which no effort could be fruitless, he also felt very much indebted to them that, at the outset of his career with them, they had, in this very kind manner, shown their sympathy and their help, and had already, though he was a stranger, bound him to themselves by such an act of kindness. He trusted that God might spare him long to labour there amongst them all, and he trusted that as he came among them with very much less experience than many of them had, that they would be forbearing with him, and that they might strive together to build up that parish, and to build up each other in all spiritual grace and gifts. He had again to thank them most heartily for their kind gift."

On the first Sunday after the induction, he preached in the evening, to a crowded church, from the text "Abide with us" (Luke xxiv. 29). In his closing remarks he said that he had spoken there that day for the first time as their minister, and if there was any text more appropriate than another for their opening service, any prayer specially befitting at that time, any verse of Scripture which was a suitable motto for both preacher and congregation, surely it was the aspiration of the text, "Abide with us, O Lord." As long as it should please the Great and Divine Head of the Church they were called to be together, and he was charged to be especially with them in their times of perplexity and trouble. They were called to be with each other most especially in the study of the Bible. They could not read the Bible too earnestly and constantly, but all the preaching and reading of it would be alike in vain, unless they both came to it in a spirit of prayer. If he needed anything to solemnize him at that time, surely he would find it in the thought that, as their minister, he was called upon to be specially with them in their hours of bereavement and death. It was in such an hour that every minister must realize how mocking and useless his

office would be, unless he were but the humble instrument to point the dying Christian to the unfailing help of the Great High Priest—Christ. They ought to pray that He might abide with them in all their relations with each other, to elevate and sanctify them, and that He might specially abide with them in the service of that Holy Place. It was their duty and his duty to make the service of the House of God beautiful and attractive, but the finest service, and most eloquent sermons were worse than useless, unless Christ's presence and power breathed and lived in them. He was set there as their minister, and he would desire at all times to remember that the word meant, literally, their servant. But as it was said by the great parliamentary orator of the people's representatives, so it was true of the people's minister: 'It was his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure to you, and in every case to prefer your interest to his own; but his free and unbiassed judgment, his enlightened conscience, he dared not sacrifice to you, nor to any man. These he does not derive from your pleasure; no, nor from the laws and constitution,—they are a trust from heaven, for the abuse of which he is deeply responsible.' The Christian minister must never make popularity his guide, either in what he says or what he does, for were he to do so, he would degrade and disgrace his office. While he trusted and hoped they would live in harmony together, while it was his office to promote peace and concord, they would remember he would fail still more grievously in his duty, if he shrank from doing or saying that which he believed to be right, from fear of giving offence. An offence might be a stumbling-block, and all offences, as Christian men, they should avoid; but what seems a stumbling-block might often, in reality, be a stepping-stone to raise them up to a noble Christian life. While he must ever remember he was their servant, he must never let that make him forget that he was still more emphatically the servant of Christ. He reminded them that he claimed no sacerdotal exclusion. They were all of them—it was their birthright as Christian men and women

—‘kings and priests unto God.’ On them, as well as on him, depended whether all the virtues of the Christian life, whether purity and kindness, and charity and truth, should make that little corner of God’s world beautiful and holy.

Into the work of his parish Mr. Douglas entered with steady enthusiasm, mastering the details of his duty rapidly, and striving, by careful attention to what people call trifles, to make the church an efficient instrument for promoting the glory of Christ. Nor did he restrict himself to the labours of his own parish. A good neighbour, he was ever glad to assist his brethren in the ministry whenever that was practicable. In the pulpits of the other clergymen of Berwickshire he often appeared, and frequently in dissenting churches. At social gatherings connected with churches he was often present. The congregational soiree, so little appreciated by many now, he regarded as a useful means for promoting the social aspect of Christian life. A friend—a Berwick clergyman, to whom we are largely indebted for information concerning his Foulden ministry—has kindly sent us the following interesting summary of an address, given at a social meeting, on the “Benefits of Soirees.”

“I.—They suggested the truth that Religion is to penetrate and leaven the whole life; that its object is to lead us, not only to sanctify the Sabbath, but to sanctify the whole week.

“II.—The meeting together of ministers and members of different churches suggested the idea of church union, and also led to promote it.

“III.—Soirees suggest the truth that every one in the church has a place and work of his own to do. A soiree owes its success to the presence and efforts of all, conjointly. So the church needs every man and woman, boy and girl, to do something.”

Foulden is connected with the Presbytery of Chirnside. His brethren in the Presbytery showed their regard for his ability by entrusting to his editorial care the supplement issued by them in connection with *Life and Work*.

While he conducted with his accustomed zeal the ordinary services of the Church—including Sabbath evening lectures,

kitchen meetings in remote parts of the parish, and weekly prayer-meetings—he devoted special attention to the young. His Bible class was numerous and proved a great success. He established a Young Men's Guild, and mainly by his efforts a village library was founded.

The following extracts from letters to a fellow-student, written in the early days of his Foulden ministry, show that he had conceived a high ideal of the preacher's vocation, and that he was prepared to expend both time and pains in realizing it in himself and others:—

“ My dear K——,

“ I wish to make a beginning right off with our correspondence and mutual study, so I send herewith (along with “ Life and Work ”) three sermons. Now, I send them as a start for our mutual exchange, which is to be one sermon a week. Criticise them thoroughly; be fearless in expression; and let us chiefly point out *faults*. That is the way by which to help each other. The end, remember, we have in view is to stimulate to excellence in preaching and preparing our sermons. Our judgments should be (1) What is the character of the sermon as a whole? (2) Its general defects; (3) In what other way might the subject have been better wrought out? (4) What special points does it fail in?—illustration, reasoning, explanation of text, theme, warmth, force of application; (5) Accepting scheme adopted, how better to work it out; (6) Special defects of particular parts or divisions; (7) Ditto of language; (8) Is introduction or conclusion, especially latter, faulty?

“ Now, I think if we try to work out on this theory we will succeed in doing a mutual good. As to sermon study, we should agree to these rules—(1) Read one of Robertson's* *daily*; (2) Write out one, at least, weekly; (3) Try to make one or two sketch outlines weekly, which we would exchange with each other; (4) If possible, try to run through (just scanning to see style, &c.) some one volume of sermons or speeches every week; (5) Read Bible at least half-an-hour daily; (6) Try to go through one book of the Bible weekly, with, perhaps, a short commentary, but so merely as to understand it. If you approve these rules you might say so, and if you like, you might admit any intimate friend you think of to

* Robertson of Brighton.

co-operate. Our motto should be 'The Best Work,' and here is 'Nil sine labore.' Now I look to receive yours in return. As to study—Plato's Republic, let us go through that together; I have begun the Introduction and will go on. Along with that, what do you say to our reading 'Ideal Commonwealth' (in Morley's series), and Shakespeare—'The Tempest' and 'Measure for Measure'—as both dealing in a way with Government both in the Individual and the General."

"I was glad to hear you had been down at Blairmore, and quite envied you your days in 'Fairyländ.' I have preached twice since I came here—once with paper, and once without. I am more and more convinced that the latter is the right way, though it makes one feel he should give twice the preparation he does. I am beginning to feel I shall have much more time for preparation here, and reading. I am getting books from the College Library, to read and study at least four or five hours a day. Let us first of all get the best historical and critical knowledge of the Book we have to interpret—the Bible; and as the New Testament is the most important part of it, as it is, at least, its culmination, we are to direct our attention specially to it. That is, first, we must read and study the life and times of Christ—the orthodox books, Farrar and Geikie, Neander, Ebrard, Lange; the critical or negative, Ewald, Keim, Rénan, Strauss, and all lights, orthodox or negative, we can get—for the life of Jesus is the centre and foundation of Christianity, and just now is the engrossing subject of all schools. Then comes the life of Paul, as the greatest of the Apostles; then the other Apostles, and the early Church. Then we must turn back to the Old Testament, as that from which Christianity sprang, and without which we cannot understand it. We should read on these only the ablest books and the *newest*, if possible—at least, all the great books. Then we must study the history of the Church as it developed itself through the centuries; and not merely Church history but, side by side with it, secular history, for there we shall find the explanation of many Church movements. We must seek to know and understand not merely such events as the Reformation and the Methodist Revival, we must seek to understand likewise the Renaissance and the French Revolution. That will bring us at once to Philosophy and to its fundamental questions—What is Truth? What is Right? What-

ever we believe to be the basis of things, the one far-off event to which all moves, we shall seek to find its expression and history in these two spheres—Nature and Man; that is, we are brought to Science and Literature. Then, as we shall probably find that it is the office of Religion to make men intelligent and good, and our duties as Teachers of Religion to direct them in that, we are at once brought to Political and Social questions—to Sociology. Thus you'll see we cannot aim at being the best, the ideal minister, without wide and careful study. But we will find, probably, that Hebrew, Greek, and Latin are the least necessary things. The results of these can be got, for the most part, at second-hand; but History—of the Bible, of the Church, of the World—Philosophy, Science, Sociology, Literature, these we must make our own, or be for ever incompetent, ignorant teachers, who may make the unthinking laugh, but will surely make the judicious grieve."

Interesting glimpses into his life at this period, showing the subjects which chiefly occupied his thoughts, are also afforded by the following passages from letters written to the biographer:—

"The Manse,

"Foulden, 23rd October, 1884.

"My Dear C—,

"Many thanks for your parcel, which came duly to hand. Miller's 'Philosophy of Law' I have only partly read, but what I have seen of it I like. Hegel I have not got much done to, but I am charmed with the Milton, and as for 'Paradise Lost,' I am at the sixth book, and the man who says it is dull 'he hath no music in his soul.' I am glad you got Morison's 'Mark,' and I am sure you will find it good. I am glad you enjoyed the conference you speak of so much, there is great need always for the deepening of the Spiritual life. I feel it sadly myself.

"I had a visit of the vicar of Berwick a week or two ago, and he told me they are to have another mission week there in November, and invited me to join them. I mean to go at least to one meeting. I hope, if grace and strength is given, to try and do my winter's work here at home better than I have done. I have got all my lectures for the library arranged for, and a catalogue of the books into the printer's hands. I mean myself to give a course of Sunday evening lectures on the unfamiliar books of the Bible, beginning with Jeremiah. I am also going to have a fortnightly

prayer meeting in the village, and similar meetings in the cottages. As for my study, I hope to redeem the time with it better than I have done. I am reading Farrar's 'Early Days of Christianity' (you should get it, it is very good); his 'Witness of History to Christ' is also good. By the way, I have had my attention called to a noble society in connection with the English Church. I wrote for pamphlets, and I now send some to you. It is called 'The White Cross Army.' You'll see at once its object. I wish to introduce it into our own parish, but have not as yet decided in what way. One thing I feel convinced of, that every *man*, above all, every *Christian*, should do something to stem this fearful tide. I think, too, this puts it on its true footing, shows the awful *unmanliness* of those who do not 'keep themselves by God's grace from the evil.' Don't you think you could do something with this in your mission? There is a noble book I am reading just now from Berwick Library, 'Sister Dora.' You should read it. It is the record of a true human life lived in this nineteenth-century England, and yet as grand as the legend of any saint. In fact, I always feel inclined to say 'Saint Dora.' I look forward indeed to the time when I will be in Glasgow again, and will have the pleasure of seeing you. I do not know, however, when that will be. I must stay at home and work."

"Foulden Manse,
"Berwick-on-Tweed, 5th June, 1885.

"My Dear C——,

"I hope you will not think me so unmindful as I am afraid I must appear. Before your letter came, however, I was away at the General Assembly, and you can understand I had no time then for any communications. I hoped after the Assembly to have had a few days in Glasgow with you and other old friends, but various urgent matters in the parish called me home here direct from Edinburgh.

"Remember me most kindly to your dear mother. Tell me how she is keeping. I hope you are both bearing up, believing all things are working together for good. How true Cowper's beautiful hymn—how impossible to get beyond it—yet how blessed that we can rest in that, not happy or even contented, but hopefully in

very pain and sorrow, waiting for the dawn of light and rest—
‘God moves in a mysterious way.’

“I am sitting down to study again, ashamed of past idleness, and, I hope, heartily desirous to do better. Do let me have a line from you soon, and I shall try to send you a long and full letter; and believe me, with fullest sympathy and prayer,

“Ever yours,

“JOHN D. DOUGLAS.”

NOTE.—When this letter was written my mother was lying on her death-bed.

“My Dear C——,

“I am sorry to have been so long in returning these books, but they required a longer time to get through than I thought, though I am sorry to say I read some of them very hurriedly. Matheson’s book is rather long drawn out, but still very good. Balfour’s very interesting, as showing that science has no greater validity than religion, but equally rests on belief, though I don’t assent to a lot of his arguments. I must ask you, however, to hand these in to Mr. G——, and get me some of the following. I would like one each of these different divisions:—

“(1) Philosophical—Green’s Latest work on Ethics; Lecky’s History of European Morals; Carpenter’s Mental Physiology; Caird’s book on Comte.

“(2) Theological—New book on Jacob Boëhme; Godet’s Defence of Christian Faith; Arthur’s Fernley Lecture, Difference between Physical and Moral Law; James Hinton’s Philosophy and Religion; Mill’s Essays on Religion; Milman’s Latin Christianity.

“Any good *new* commentary on the Book of Revelation of St. John, or work dealing with it generally. Motley’s History of the United Netherlands, or any good book in general literature. I hope to get a long letter from you telling me all about your reading. I’ve not got as much done as I would have liked, but I’ve finished Froude’s History, am going through Motley’s, and am at the divine Plato going through the Republic. I have just started Pascal’s Thoughts. By all means read it—it is a splendid and noble book, a work to waken thought and hold it.”

During his ministry in Foulden an agitation in favour of the Disestablishment of the Church was set on foot by the dissenters all over Scotland. In the defence of the Church of his fathers Mr. Douglas nobly bore his part, both in public meetings and in the local press. The following address, which he delivered at Coldstream in March, 1886, may serve as a specimen of his utterances on this question. He said:—

“Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,—I have very great pleasure in coming before you to speak on the subject on which you have asked me to address you. I know that it is said by some that in upholding the Church ministers are only actuated by selfish motives, and are merely defending their private interests; that, in short, we are mere hirelings and mercenary partisans, and that our support is, as it were, purchased by a bribe. It is insinuated, if not broadly stated, that we would do better if we kept silence altogether, and that as our evidence is so interested no one should receive it. Now, Sir, though I should hardly stoop to answer such a calumny did I not know what advantage is taken of popular ignorance on this matter, allow me to say that I know no class so entirely impartial on this matter as the parish ministers of Scotland, for there is no class who, as far as their mere private interests are concerned, have less to lose than we. So far from Disestablishment attacking our emoluments, it would in many cases have increased them, and the Bill which was drafted and presented to Parliament offered a distinct bribe to every minister of our Church. Disestablishment cannot touch one penny of our revenue; the whole existing race of clergy are secure of their life-interest; and were we only actuated by the selfish motives attributed to us, we might take our ease secure, that whatever disasters befell our Church, we would be unharmed. But I am sure there is not one minister so unworthy the Church he belongs to as to make this selfish security the guide of his conduct. And I say, Sir, we are in our place when we put ourselves at the head of our people in resistance to a measure which, though it cannot touch ourselves, would inflict a most disastrous blow on the Church we love and the land we honour. I shall never forget the eloquent words addressed some years ago to the ministers of our Church by the late venerated Dean Stanley—‘It

may be yours,' he said, 'to be the last generation of the ministers of the national and historic Church of Scotland, but even if it be, let it be your ambition to fall like the soldiers of Isandula, with the colours wrapped around you, and greater even in your disaster than any of your predecessors in their success.' I do not believe that we shall be the last parish ministers in Scotland; I am not the least afraid of the contest, if there is only a fair field and no favour. But a thousand times rather would I see our Church overwhelmed than afraid to defend her right; better, far better, to be defeated than disgraced; and disgraced we should be if our ministers were either afraid or ashamed to resist the cry for Disestablishment, and to show how utterly hollow and mischievous is the agitation for it. There are several principles which the Church of Scotland embodies, and on which her defence may well be rested; for they are not only the source of much of her greatness, but they are in themselves dear to many even beyond her pale. There is, first of all, the principle of *Establishment*. By means of our Church there is a national recognition of religion, and our Church is the Established Church, because she is in alliance with the State. Now I submit that there are only three ways in which the State can treat Christianity.

"It may determine to persecute it; it may make it a crime in any of its citizens to profess that religion at all. That was how the Roman empire acted towards our religion; and that was how many modern states, following that evil example, have acted towards certain forms of Christianity; that was how the American colonies, for example, though they had no established Church, persecuted the Quakers. Persecution of religion has nothing to do with the establishment of religion, and has often prevailed, and may prevail again, where there is no national recognition of religion at all. Leaving aside the position of the persecution of Christianity, there are left only the alternatives of establishing religion or ignoring it altogether. Those, therefore, who uphold Disestablishment must accept the latter alternative—that is, they must maintain a most complete and absolute indifference to religion on the part of the State. Now, on what grounds can they rest—what, on the very face of it looks such a suspicious proposal? It cannot surely be on the grounds of religion itself; and yet, those who make this proposal are, for the most part, believers in Christianity. But I would like to know where they find warrant for their asser-

tion that the State shall in no way give any recognition or countenance to religion; that the nation, in its collective capacity, must entirely ignore it and pass it by. If they quote such texts as those where Christ declares 'My kingdom is not of this world,' they must be aware that these were directed, not against those who were seeking to bring the State into alliance with the Church, but against those who would have substituted the Church for the State altogether. But it seems to me no attempt can be more foolhardy than to prove from the New Testament that the state must be an entirely secular and irreligious thing. It is alien, I venture to submit, to the whole tone and tenor of every sacred book. St. Paul sees even in the heathen Roman Governor 'a minister of God;' civil duties are to him also religious duties; and this wholly novel doctrine of two utterly separate and alien powers, which are never to touch and mingle, which are to enter into no relations at all, would have seemed to him a perversion of his teaching, as it has been rejected by every great Biblical scholar and Christian teacher, at least until very recent times. But I say, moreover, that the attempt at an absolute isolation of Church and State is impossible; it cannot be carried out in its entirety. The State is something more than the policeman, it is the whole organised civil life of men. Now, can you divorce all the concerns of that life from religion? I say you cannot. Religion is like the all-encompassing air, it must and will find an entrance. It mingles with our laws, our administration of justice, our public education, our social statutes; and to say that the State has nothing to do with religion is either to misuse words or to utter a transparent absurdity. But here I will be told, perhaps, of the claims of what is called 'religious equality,' that word we hear so much of from many who never stay to enquire what it means. Now, sir, I believe in religious equality, I am an advocate for it, and what is more, the church for which I have the honour to speak to-night has always been its defender. There is no church which has a more stainless record in this respect than our own. She has never persecuted. Her hands are unstained with blood, which is more than some unestablished churches could say, as the history of America can testify. Religious equality means, and can only mean, that no one shall be persecuted or made to suffer in his civil life for his religious opinions, and this the Church of Scotland has always upheld; and it was the reproach made against

her by the first secession that she would not persecute. There is the fullest and truest religious equality in the land ; in the sight of the law all men are equal ; no matter what religious belief they profess, they have the fullest and most perfect civil freedom. What is meant, however, by those who use this phrase so much, is something altogether different from the natural meaning of the words. It is the old claim for an absolute indifference towards all religion by the State. But this is not religious equality at all. Because there is some national recognition of religion, how are men thereby unequally or unjustly treated? It is a common benefit which is thus conferred on all alike. If some refuse to receive that benefit—which the great majority yet hold to be such—where is the inequality when there is no one interfered with? If the great majority of the citizens of a country think it a right thing to have a national recognition of Christianity, how are they unjust to you, when they leave you perfectly free to refuse to join in the recognition? Are not you tyrannical, if, because you do not see the good of this, you determine no one else shall? If the inhabitants of a city think it a good thing to celebrate the Queen's birthday, and recommend all shops to be closed on that day, wherein are they unjust to the republican shopkeeper who is quite at liberty to have his shop open all day long? Or, because he will not recognise the day, is that to be a reason why no other shall be allowed to do so? But those who cry out for this so-called principle are themselves untrue to it. If the State is to have nothing to do with religion, are they prepared—as they must be on these grounds—to see the Sabbath abolished, to have oaths in courts of justice cease, to have the Bible and all religious teaching banished from the schools, to have the throne made free to a Papist or an infidel, to have the law of marriage swept away? Yet they must do all those if they are to carry out their principle; nay, they must go as far as the Society of French Infidels would do, and erase the very name of God from the reading-books of the children ; and they must make that Professor, who is a prominent advocate of Disestablishment, and who yet teaches the Science of Religion in Edinburgh University, shut up his class. The truth is, that this principle has only one logical meaning, and it was so understood by every great thinker, and especially by every great Scotchman, at least, till very recent days ; it means—and so they would have called it—National Atheism. Yes, we are told

that the State must foster and encourage art, she must enact laws to preserve the public health, she must administer education, she must touch and mould the life of her people in a thousand ways. But there is one subject on which alone her voice is never to be heard; every national gathering is to be dumb on this only, for this there is to be no great public edifice, no public official shall utter a syllable on this forbidden question; this shall be the one only subject which, as a nation, we shall perfectly and entirely ignore, shall banish from every school, and thrust aside from every relation of the national life. And what subject, may I ask, is this that is to be accursed from the national life of men? Is it some dreadful and daring impiety, or some degrading or polluting history? Nay, sir, it is religion, which all men have hitherto believed to be the very blessing and glory of a nation's life, her most indispensable support—her cheap yet supreme defence. And, I ask, what else is this but to proscribe Christianity altogether, and, as far as may be done in modern times, again to persecute her. 'These be thy gods, O Israel;' this is what is really covered by an artful phrase. But I have more confidence in the countrymen of Knox and Chalmers than to believe they will ever adopt what both these great Scotchmen would have esteemed the basest national apostasy.

"I maintain, then, that the State must, in some way, recognize religion, that it ought, in some form, to be in alliance with the Church, and I submit, that, in the Established Church, you have what meets the case; what may be improved, if you see fit, but what, on no account, ought to be swept away. And here I come to a point which is sometimes raised—I mean the spiritual independence of the Church. We are told by some that the Church is in bondage to the State, that she is not free and spiritually independent. Now this is a question often raised, more especially by our friends of the Free Church, and as I know some members of that church may be present, I wish especially to address myself to them. And in doing so, I need not say that I wish to speak with all honour and respect of the Free Church. There is no feeling more general in our own Church, especially, I am sure, among her ministers. I speak for the younger generation of these, I believe, when I say we honour and love that Church hardly less than our own. It was said lately by a great Free churchman, 'there are no sects in Scotland, only parties.' We do not feel to the other two Scottish Churches, as that they

are alien Churches at all; they form part with us, of the wider Church of Scotland. In great measure, we have a common history; there are proud and sacred memories we all alike hold. We can never forget that these Churches came out of ours; we are not only not enemies, we are brothers, and here, too, 'blood is thicker than water.' Of the Free Church especially, we exult in her great men and her great deeds. We claim a share in these too; they are ours as well as hers. I will go further, and say, and I say it with two of the greatest leaders of our own Church of the present day, that while we believe the Free Church was not altogether infallible in 1843, we acknowledge, with sincere regret, the mistakes of those who formed the dominant party in our own Church. We cheerfully and willingly acknowledge the good the Free Church has done in a thousand ways; but surely the way to make up an old quarrel is not to re-open it again—surely it is always better to—

‘ Let the dead past bury its dead.’

A great many things have happened since 1843; and, above all, that which most incontestably was the fountain and spring of all the trouble, the law of Patronage, has been swept away. We believe our Church is now as free as it is possible for any Church to be made. It is a great Free churchman, the Lord Justice-Clerk Moncrieff, who, as late as 1870, said, from his own seat on the bench, 'Within their spiritual province the Church Courts are supreme, as we are within the Civil.' It is a great Free Church minister, Dr. Fraser, of London, who, only a year ago, wrote, 'To tell me, that the Church of Scotland, as now existing and administered, is a creature or slave of the State, seems to me either speaking foolishly or bearing false witness.'

“ But there is a second principle which our Church embodies, and that is the principle of Endowment. 'This is not the same as the former, for an Established Church might yet not be endowed, and we have a case of this, I believe, in the National Church of Russia. Those who object to our Church, however, do so largely on this ground, and with many people disestablishment means simply disendowment, the stripping the Church of her possessions. You know that our Church is supported by what are called 'teinds,' that is, sums of money which in the different parishes are collected from the landlords. Now, many people seek to represent this as a tax, but I deliberately and carefully state that *not one penny of*

taxation goes to support our Church. That the teinds are not a tax, is shown by the fact, that were the Church disestablished to-morrow, those who pay teinds would still continue to pay them, though they would then be applied to other purposes. The teinds represent the Church's property, and the Church is by far the oldest proprietor in the country. These endowments of the Church were never given by the State ; they were the fruit of the private liberality of the members of the Church. No one who has the smallest claim to be heard on this subject can deny this. The Church is now upheld by the free gifts of her people in olden time, precisely as the other Churches are already gathering accumulated funds, and forming endowments. And it has been calculated, that if all the free gifts, such as are given to our Church now, had been allowed to accumulate since the Reformation, the income of the Church would be three or four times as large as all the teinds. And though these teinds come down through Roman Catholic times, remember the Scottish Church was always a separate and independent Church, and though she reformed her faith then, she did not cease to be the Church of Scotland, and she held her property as the same National Church. Now, it is these endowments disestablishment would take away ; and I say, nothing could be more unjust, for, on precisely the same grounds, you could confiscate the Sustentation Fund of the Free Church, the endowments of the U.P. Church, or the accumulated savings of any Friendly Society. And to show you how clearly dishonest and oppressive it would be, let me remind you that the only Disestablishment Bill ever brought forward proposed to take from our Church not only these old endowments but even all the money given and the churches built within the last forty years, at a cost of over two million pounds, all subscribed by our members within living memory. The Liberation Society has itself acknowledged by this conduct that all the endowments of the Church are the outcome of the same free-will offerings, and in taking these away, they are attempting what can only be called confiscation and injustice.

“ And I want you to think on the advantages which flow from endowment to the people of the Church and of the whole country. It is by this means that you have in every parish in Scotland a church in which the poorest, equally with the richest, has a right to sit ; and a minister, whose sacred and appointed duty it is to

care for all, and be their spiritual friend. Endowment is, I contend, the only way in which you can give, all over the country, an independent position to the ministers of a Church, and set them free from the harassment of finance, that distracts them from their religious calling. And in case you think I am prejudiced in this matter, I shall refer you to the testimony of two of the greatest Nonconformist ministers in the last generation, and in this. The celebrated John Angel James speaks more than once of the humiliation and hindrance ministers have to undergo, who are dependent entirely on the voluntary gifts of a congregation; and Dr. Donald Fraser of London has well said, 'Those who have had much to do with the raising of funds in non-endowed churches, know too well that under the voluntary flag there is a great deal of practical involuntariness, and that adequate support for religious objects is not obtained without anxious effort and importunity. It is a piece of infatuation to deny the utility of endowment for the maintenance of churches, among the poor in large cities, and in sparsely-peopled districts in the country.' The same testimony comes to us from America, where in a report to the Pan-Presbyterian Council at Philadelphia, in 1880, we read, 'Oh, if many of our men of means only realized how the inadequate support of *most of our ministers* is producing, all over the land, burning brains, and aching hearts, and broken spirits, and crushed energies, and prostrated powers, and physical wrecks, and disqualifying men for the taxing, burden-bearing life of their pastors, they would more cheerfully lay their means on the altar of the Lord.' Now some may think that in all this, I am arguing simply, for the good of my own class. But remember, what affects your ministers, affects yourselves. If you lower their position, you necessarily weaken the religious teaching and service offered to you. As was said in America, 'You can easily get a preacher for fifty dollars, but then he will only be a fifty dollar preacher.' I know, and most heartily acknowledge the high character and devotion of the ministers in the sister Churches in Scotland, many of whom I count it an honour to be able to call my friends. But remember that in Scotland we have always, in all the Presbyterian Churches, maintained the standard set us in the position of the old Church, and what it would be if that were altogether swept away, and we became a 'chaos of warring sects,' no one who believes in the high position of the clergy, as

securing a lofty standard of character and attainments, will like to contemplate.

“Let me only add a word as to the relation of endowments to free education. It is said that by disestablishing the Church we could get the means to give free education. Now, sir, I protest that it is altogether mean and unfair to try to excite the people against the Church, by holding out to them a bribe; I can call it by no other name than the basest political profligacy. If the Church should be destroyed, let that be advocated on its own merits, but to incite to its destruction by talking of the plunder to be secured is to appeal to the lowest passions, and is worthy only of the leader of a mob. Free education may be a good thing in itself. I believe it is, and that it has much to be said for it; but Disestablishment would hardly pay one-fifteenth of its cost, and only after twenty or thirty years had gone; and the great majority in our country parishes who saved a shilling in this way would, at least, lose ten by the disendowment of their Church.

“But allow me to point you to a far nobler and more excellent way of doing away with the distractions and divisions of our religious life. There is no one, I believe, but regrets the present state of the churches in Scotland. It is both a scandal and a shame that those who agree so entirely, not only in the fundamentals of Christianity, but even in all its minutest points, should continue to be divided from each other; that every little parish and village should have its three competing churches, wasting the religious power of the country, and turning what ought to be a service of brotherhood—the common assembly of the Sunday—into an expression of our division, and almost an incentive to hate. It is high time for the Scottish Churches to come together, but it is insanity to speak of it being accomplished by Disestablishment. That is opposed by the Established Church, which numbers at least the half of the Presbyterians, and it is not less offensive to many in the other Churches too. How can that be the means of union which would revive all the old quarrels with tenfold bitterness? The Establishment is not the obstacle to the union. Many in the U.P. Church, many even of her ministers, believe in it; the whole of that Church was willing to leave it ‘an open question’ only a few years ago. The Free Church is committed in her standards to the principle of the establishment of religion, and I believe the great majority of her people are true to that. I

by no means say the Established Church is to gain all; no one wishes the other Churches to come, as it were, in submission to her. On the contrary, it is we who are willing to let them have the victory, and we would, I am sure, all of us in the old Church be ready to make any sacrifice of our pride and position to be united again with our brethren. In defending the two great principles of Establishment and Endowment, in writing over these our resolute 'no surrender,' we are defending what they, too, are vowed to, and what they, too, would benefit by. But I repeat again, nothing would be so calamitous to all the interests of religion as Disestablishment; and it would put an end, utterly and for ever, to all thought and hope of union. The arguments by which it is maintained will not bear a moment's examination by any candid and common-sense mind. I hold in my hand a leaflet extensively circulated by the Liberation Society at the election time, and entitled 'The Good of Disestablishment.' They have evidently gathered together all the arguments they could set in array against the Church, and yet, I venture to say, I could get any clever school-boy to demolish them all. They set out by saying that 'this would put the Established Church on the same footing as the Apostolic Church.' Now no Church can be as the Apostolic Church, because this is not the Apostolic age, and almost every circumstance of the Church has altered. I should like to know what existing Church is on precisely the same footing as the Apostolic. The only thing in which the existing Church can be as the Apostolic is in her inward and spiritual life, and it is a mere slander to say that in that respect our Church may not be as near that pattern as any other. But in almost every respect of form and organization no one of the other Churches can set up any exclusive claim to be a repetition of the Apostolic Church. Again, it is said, 'Disestablishment would do away with an unfair distinction among the Churches.' I have already shown you there can be no unfairness where all are at liberty and none are oppressed. But I am astonished to hear it said that the good of one Church can be the evil of another. Are not all Christian Churches part of one Church? Are they not seeking one end? Are they not members of the one mystical body, and if one is aided or advanced ought not all to rejoice? But it is said again 'Disestablishment would benefit the Established Church.' And here, I am sorry to say, I encounter what I

can only call by no milder term than most glaring and complete misstatements. It is said our congregations cannot choose their ministers, nor own their churches, nor manage their affairs with independence. A cause that has to stoop to untruths like these must be very weak indeed. But the next reason is most extraordinary, and reverses the last altogether. 'The last spoke of our own Church being benefited by Disestablishment; but here it is said that 'churchmen have, and use the advantage; and dissenters must suffer, or go over to Establishment.' How these manifest contradictions can be reconciled I leave to the author of a paper, in which every sentence begs the whole question which does not utterly misrepresents it.

"I have detained you too long; but let me only say, in conclusion, that I have no fear for our Church, nor the cause she represents, if those who uphold her are only true to themselves, and let their voices be heard, and their influence felt. But remember, on our side at least, this is no mere ministers' battle. We would be recreant cowards—we would shame all our gallant and devoted predecessors, if we shunned the contest forced upon us, and were not willing and ready to defend those sacred principles to which we are so solemnly vowed. But remember, it is with you, it is with the people of Scotland, this issue really rests; it is for you, under God, to determine whether this dear old land shall lose her ancient Church, and her public recognition of religion, that which, by our greatest nobleman, has been so well and truly called 'the national flag.' I cannot believe it, you would be unworthy your name, and would shame your ancestors, if, because this cause is assailed, you should therefore forsake it; if, because this principle is amid the tempest, you should tremble to raise and uphold it. Rather, if you have Scottish hearts at all, will the danger and the storm only deepen your devotion and loyalty; even as it is said of the Swiss peasant, that the tempest that sweeps his native land only makes it the more beloved.

'And as a child, when scaring sounds molest,
Clings close and closer to the mother's breast,
So the loud torrent and the whirlwind's roar,
But bind him to his native mountains more.'

"But our Church, in spite of all factious opposition, and while resolutely defending her position, not for any mere selfish ends of her own, but for the sacred blessings she can thus confer on the

nation at large, shall never, I am sure, forget her high and spiritual functions amid the clamour of political strife. I am confident that this shall be the aspiration and endeavour of all her ministers, and of all her people, that, undismayed by this tempest that rages round her, she shall rise in spiritual temper and religious earnestness far above it all :—

‘As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
 Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm,
 Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 Eternal sunshine settles on its head.’”

About the same time Mr. Douglas delivered an address on the Endowment Scheme before the Parochial Association, Whitsome. It is in place here as a sequel to what has gone before :—

“I have been asked here to-night to speak to you on one of the special schemes which the Church has appointed and recommended to the support of all her people as essential to the discharge of her great mission. I think it a good thing that you as an association and a parish should thus seek to fix your mind on the several methods and purposes which are laid before you by the Church—should seek to understand them, to learn their claims upon you, to see what recommends them to your support, and so be able to give them at once an intelligent and enthusiastic assistance. I think this is what we want very much in all our parishes and congregations. Too many in our Church are content simply to be appealed to for their aid, and to give that, be it much or little, hardly caring or knowing almost at all for what they give. Now I believe that is not the true way of carrying on the great works of a Church. I think the Church would address all her members in the words of the orator who said—‘I do not ask for your assistance, I do not ask for your money, I ask for your understanding and attention, and if you give me these, if you once realize the claims this cause has upon you, it will not be in your power even to withhold your help.’ This scheme is one of the most important works carried on by the Church, and it is an attempt, as its very name denotes, to carry out the principle of Endowment. But what do we mean by that principle? Well, its application involves these three things:—
 (1.) That in each congregation there is a yearly sum forthcoming,

independent of all changes and accidents, and however poor the locality may be, for the support of the ordinances of religion there. Without this the fountain of Church life might there fail just when it was wanted most,

‘ Like a summer-dried fountain
When the need was the sorest.’

This, however, converts what might only be an intermittent and temporary stream, into an unfailing spring. (2.) It assigns to each congregation a definite field of labour and responsibility. Instead of spreading its energies over a wide field, and possibly squandering them in contact or competition with others, it concentrates them within an appointed circle. (3.) Lastly, for all within that district it makes the congregation, especially in its minister, responsible. He is not the minister of those only who choose to go to him. It is his duty to go to all others who are not in attendance on religious ordinances. He is to be the spiritual guide and friend of all in his parish who do not reject his ministrations. Now, I think these principles will commend themselves to all as a most efficient way of carrying on the religious work entrusted to the Church, but we shall see their full value later on. Meantime I wish just to say a word on the *History* of this scheme. I believe about the first great name connected with it is the ever-memorable one of Chalmers. You know that about the beginning of the century the population of our country began to show a large and rapid increase. The introduction of steam led to a great activity in manufactures; villages grew into towns; towns and villages sprang up where before there had only been uninhabited fields. All this was good for the country, and the foundation of much of our commercial greatness; but meantime it had one evil effect. The people were getting beyond the ordinances of religion, the old churches and the existing staff of ministers could no longer serve them. The General Assembly set itself to remedy the evil, and to reach those who were getting into a churchless state. Then Dr. Chalmers threw himself into the work, and many chapels were built. But there came unfortunate ecclesiastical strife within the Church, and the disastrous secession of 1843. The Church was still staggering under this blow when one noble-minded man came forward to devote his life to this work. The Free Church had no doubt largely added to the church accommodation of the country by the churches she had at once proceeded to build. Still, in spite

of it all, there was much religious destitution in the land, and in poorer districts especially many were beyond church attendance. Dr. James Robertson, an eloquent debater, a respected scholar, and Professor in one of our Universities, headed the new endeavour of the Church, which was not only to plant churches where required by the people, but also to make these like the old churches of the country by giving them a perpetual endowment and assigning to their care a district—making them, in short, for Church purposes, what the old parishes were, as the term *quoad sacra* now given to them implies. At first Dr. Robertson carried a proposal to endow and equip 50 such new parishes. Then he proposed a further 100, though he did not live to see the completion of these, for he died in 1860, worn out by his increasing labours on behalf of this scheme. Dr. Smith of North Leith, another gallant worker, threw himself into this task, and in 1876 he was able to announce that 250 new parishes had been erected and endowed. The magnitude of this work will be appreciated when it is recollected that the mere endowment of *each* parish costs £3000, and the cost of building and equipping the church is often another equally large sum. And yet this had been done in 250 places all over Scotland, and in the thirty years of depression that followed '43. I don't know any nobler thing that any Church has ever done; I don't know any prouder memory, even in all the splendid deeds of our Scottish history. Since 1876 another 100 churches have all but been endowed so that the Church is stronger, and our country advanced in religious teaching and good works, by 350 new parishes, costing considerably over two million pounds. Remember, however, this work is not yet done, it must still be carried on. There are still poor districts where the people are far from church, there are still new towns and villages rising where it is our duty to carry the means of grace to our fellow-countrymen. Surely we shall not suffer what has been so nobly begun to fail and languish now. The noble work and the proud memories I have spoken of would only be our disgrace if we failed now to go and do likewise.

‘What are monuments of bravery,
Where no public virtues bloom?
What avail in lands of slavery,
Trophied temples, arch, and tomb?’

I appeal to you to give your heartiest and best support to this great scheme—because (1), *It belongs to the Self-Preservation of the*

Church. These new parishes represent the fresh branches which the immemorial tree of our National Church puts forth. They are a sign of her vitality and growth. They prove that she is still sound heart of oak within ; that she can weather all coming storms as she has faced the tempests of bygone centuries. But as a tree preserves her life by the new shoots and branches and leaves every spring gives her, so we need these new parishes to carry out and sustain the life of the Church. The people of Scotland—your own children it may be, or yourselves—must find wherever they go over the old land, a congregation of the old Church to welcome them and care for them. But all we who belong to the *old* parishes should especially care for this. By the liberality and patriotism of our forefathers we have a Church which cost us nothing, where the rich and poor are entirely equal, where the minister is bound to go on religious service to every soul within his parish. Shame on us, if, enjoying these gifts as we do ‘without money and without price,’ we do nothing to extend them to those who, though poorer than we, have no such advantages. But (2) again, *This scheme embodies a long and widely-tried principle.* If there is one thing sure it is that the only successful way of bringing a whole country under the power of religion, giving it a nationally-wide Christian character, is by making the Christian Church to be both *territorial* and *endowed*. In this way every one is reached by continuous religious instruction, and nothing is left to chance. It was the parish schools and the parish Churches that gave to Scotland its generally religious character ; and it was only by carrying out and extending this principle that men such as the great Chalmers had hope for the future of Scotland. Unhappily our disastrous Church divisions have crippled this work not a little ; but even yet it is not too late for all the three Scottish Churches, none of which reject this great method, to join together for its perfect fulfilment. I have only time to point out to you in a word how (3) this principle is *National not Sectarian*, it seeks the good of all and not only of the members of one Church ; how it (4) *Strives for a permanent and not a mere passing good.* Every Church so equipped abides a centre of good influence, a fountain of blessing, above all accidents of change and time. And (5) lastly, I say this scheme is *founded on a generous principle.* As he who plants an oak is said ‘to look forward to future ages and plant for posterity,’ so this scheme contemplates not the good of the passing generation alone, but of the

remotest ages of our countrymen. Surely this should animate us if any generous feeling can touch our heart at all. Long after we have been gathered to our fathers, long after the brief memory we have left behind shall have faded into forgetfulness, the religious influence we have exerted in our life, and especially through such schemes as this, shall be a living power and blessing in the homes of men ; they shall look back with grateful remembrance to their unknown benefactors in that far distant time. But unknown to them, no deed of religious charity and goodness is unknown or will be unacknowledged by Him who has said, ‘ Even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in my name shall not lose its reward. Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren ye did it unto Me.’ ”

The following song for the Kirk was written about the same time:—

“ I repeat, the Church is the national flag if ever there were a national flag raised in this country.”—*Speech of the Duke of Argyle.*

“ The dear old Church our fathers loved,
 For which our heroes fell,
 That kept the faith through blood and death,
 We’ll guard and keep thee well.
 Thy foemen shout ; but, loud and stout,
 This shall our answer be—
 No stone shall fall from that fair wall
 Our fathers raised for thee.

“ The Church which taught to every Scot
 That he was Freedom’s son ;
 That counted kings as idle things
 When they’d oppression done ;
 That made our land so brave and grand—
 The first in History’s tale ;
 Each patriot heart shall take thy part
 Whatever foes assail.

“ Our fathers’ graves we must forget,
 Unlearn our mother’s name,
 Each noble thought from thee we’ve caught
 Abandon in our shame,

“The Sacred Word from thee we’ve heard
 Must from our men’ry cease,
 Ere we join hand with that dark band
 That war against thy peace.

“Shame on his coward Scottish heart
 That will not man thy wall ;
 From hall and cot each loyal Scot
 Shall rally at thy call.
 The purple heath they dyed in death
 For thee, our fathers bold—
 O double shame, who bear their name,
 If now our hearts were cold !

“Too long thy sons have sundered been,
 But better days have come,
 All quarrels old are dead and cold,
 All former strife is dumb ;
 And this alone by us is known,
 Thou art our mother dear !
 Our fathers’ Kirk, our nation’s work,
 Destruction never fear.”

The death of the Rev. Daniel Wright, minister of Bellahouston, in the beginning of 1886, presented Mr. Douglas with an opportunity for coming nearer to his native city. He became a candidate, and, as will be found recorded in the next chapter, was elected to the vacant charge.

On Sabbath, 27th June, 1886, Mr. Douglas preached his farewell sermon in Foulden, choosing for his text Proverbs iii. 6, “In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths,” and in closing his discourse spoke as follows:—

“Brethren, I have chosen this text to-day, not only because it contains a lesson at all times valuable and important to us, but also because it seemed to me specially appropriate for the last sermon I shall preach to you as your minister. Both for you and for me at this time—for me in my departure from this familiar scene, and my entrance on an untried field of duty, for you in

losing one, and in looking forward to receiving another, minister—I desire to leave this as the special impression and belief that, through the mere accidents, and possible mistakes, even of human choice, there is a Divine purpose working—that we are not the disposers of our own destiny, that there is a ‘Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will;’ that ‘in all our ways we should acknowledge Him, and that He will direct our paths.’ But, in saying this, I do not wish to shelter my own responsibility under mere pious platitudes. In all action there is a human element as well as a Divine, and I do not mean to assert that I may be free from all blame in leaving you, or that I have certainly done the best and wisest thing. If I did, I should really be asserting my own infallibility, and I should be disregarding in a most flagrant way that very humility the text specially enjoins. I can only repeat what I said elsewhere. I do not go from you because my present parish is not large and honourable enough. A far abler and more devoted minister than I might worthily live out all his life in such a field as this, as many have indeed done. I did think, however, when many circumstances seemed to point to this change, that it might be that I might do more and better work in my new parish, for the entrance on a new field of work gives one the opportunity of not only profiting by one’s former experience, but even by the very mistakes and faults one may have made in an earlier stage. Besides, I have now for three years had the rest and quiet of this lovely parish, and I think it only right I should take my share of the more heavy work that falls to the minister of a city charge. I think, too, I may, without any presumption, read in this transference a higher choice than my own, for while it was the dream of my life to spend my days in the country, and though I think few things more enviable than an existence lived among those quiet fields, some of my friends and fellow-students thought I was wrong, and that I ought to discharge my ministry in the city. Much as I love my native town, I did not at that time agree with them, nor did I think it possible I should ever leave a country parish for it; even a few months ago I would have looked on that as utterly improbable, and in the combination of circumstances which has brought about this entirely unlooked for resolution, I recognize that overruling Providence which works even through our very mistakes and failures His own high ends. And if I think I do not leave you

from ambitious reasons, neither, I believe, am I led by mercenary motives. As far as ministers are men with domestic responsibilities, they must have regard to the adequate means of livelihood for themselves and their families; but I believe no minister worthy the name ever made an increase of income the sole or chief reason for going to another field. I can quite honestly say, I have not been determined by such a consideration, for had my resolution turned on that, it was in my power to make quite another choice and other arrangements than I have done. But when I have said all this, brethren, I do not mean to say I am altogether and entirely blameless in leaving you. It is difficult even in the court of one's own conscience to scan every possible motive and determine every spring of action. I may have been too fond of or too ready for change. I may not have looked sufficiently to your interests. I may not have had a single enough regard for the requirements of the Church of which I am the servant. Wherein I have failed in these things, wherein I have been unwise, or too ready to consent to change, I express my regret and ask your forgiveness. But I do feel, without, I hope, being too presuming and self-confident, that I can look on this change as, in large measure at least, the call of duty. I can honestly say at this crisis of my life, that I have tried to make that my guide, and that I have tried to guard against being influenced by light and frivolous or selfish reasons. I have, therefore, to say to you all my words of farewell. And my first expression must be that of thanks to all here, and to all in the parish. I feel I am a debtor to you all, for from every one of you have I received kindness, and I have not even a single unpleasant memory to carry away. The last three years of my life, in every outward circumstance and event, have been the most tranquil and serene I have ever enjoyed; and I owe it to you all, whether belonging to this congregation or not, that you have made my work, as minister, so pleasant and so encouraging. From many of you I have received kindnesses I cannot forget; by all I have been received with unfailing consideration and goodwill. I can only leave with you my thanks, and the assurance that you have made the work of my first parish seem altogether a pleasure and not a task. I wish also to offer to you my regrets; for it is impossible for any of us to look back on a large space of our lives and not see much we could have wished otherwise. Least of all, brethren, am I

able to look back on my duty among you with any entire complacency. I am afraid I have failed in my duty often: I know there is much I could have wished better performed; things undone I ought to have done; things ill done that might have been well done. For all these I offer you my heartiest apologies and regrets. As I trust they may be forgiven by a higher authority, so I hope you will extend to them your pardon also, and that I may learn from my failure and faults here to do better and more faithful work in my new parish. I have to say also that I will carry with me many remembrances. It is impossible for me ever to forget Foulden, or its tolerant and kindly people. You and it are now part of my life. The first parish and first ministry is unforgettable. I carry with me also memories too sacred likely to be forgotten. I have been associated with some of you in the solemn moments of your lives, in your hours of gladness and of grief. I have stood with you at the cradle and at the grave of those you love. I have heard last words of parting. I have spoken to you teachings for your first Communion; with you all I have shared the sacred bread of life. And now I add to you my last words of counsel and advice, and I join with them my earnest prayers and wishes for your welfare. I do not, for my part, look on the severance of the ministerial tie as a light and common thing. I do not think we ought to have a commonplace estimate of any of the relations of life. The more deep and reverent our conceptions of these, the better and truer is our life. And in so far as we feel this parting are we reminded by it of the transitoriness and changefulness of life. How true is the old pious saying, 'All goeth but God's will.' It is the teaching of the text, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' Let us try to grow in deep reverence and recognition and delight in the will of God. Let us seek to be guided by the Spirit of Christ, let us try to make the commonest and highest detail of our existence to bear a high and religious character, let us acknowledge God in the thousand little unnoticed things that fill so much of life to most, and then He will direct our paths—the great events, the decisive changes of our existence will take form and colour from Him—the outcome of all our days and years will be that He will make our end, the final issue and goal of our being, to be right and good—to be in accordance with that great law and purpose on which the basis of the world rests. Yes,

this can be our resolve and hope, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.'

'All is of God. If he but wave his hand
The mists collect, the rains fall thick and loud,
Till, with a smile of light on sea and land,
Lo ! he looks back from the departing cloud.
Angels of time and change alike are His,
Without His will they cross no threshold o'er ;
Who then would dare or wish, believing this,
Against His messengers to shut the door.'"

CHAPTER VI.

ON a gentle elevation, near to the main road between Glasgow and Paisley, stands the Parish Church of Bellahouston. It is now some four-and-twenty years since the long-felt want of a Parish church in the district was fitly supplied by this edifice. Ibroxholm, the district for which the church was originally designed, is a suburb of Glasgow, composed in great part of detached villas, thereby combining the social advantages of urban with the freedom and healthfulness of rural life. Besides the villas, there are rows of middle-class dwellings, which supply the want of the locality, while at no great distance the homes of working men furnish the other element of a community in which all classes are represented. At a meeting held on 21st March, 1860, the first committee for the erection of the church was nominated; and at another, held on the 3rd February, 1862, it was reported that a site had been generously granted by Moses Steven, Esq., of Bellahouston, and a plan of the church was submitted. At a meeting, held on the following June, estimates, amounting to nearly three thousand pounds, for building the church, were accepted, and it was arranged to proceed with the work at once. Before the church was completed it was found that the cost would exceed the original estimates, but the additional sum required was soon obtained. On the 2nd August, 1863, the church was opened, Dr. Leishman, of Govan, preaching in the forenoon, and Dr. M'Culloch, of Greenock, in the afternoon. In the following year the Rev. Mr. Porteous, of Innellan, was unanimously elected as the first minister of the church, but this gentleman never entered on his new charge, having died a short time after election. Nearly a year elapsed before a successor was appointed, but at a meeting of qualified electors, held in the church on the 23rd



T & R. ANNAN

Ever & yrs.
Geo. D. Douglass

November, 1865, the Rev. George Porter, assistant to Dr. Watson, of Dundee (now Dr. Porter of Maybole Parish), was unanimously elected to the office. In the early days of the church the musical service had no instrumental aid, and the want being very much felt, it was resolved, at a meeting held on the 3rd of April, 1866, that a committee should wait on the Presbytery to obtain permission for the use of either an organ or harmonium in the public worship of the church. The request was readily granted, and soon after a harmonium was introduced. Hitherto the church, though a creation of the Establishment, had received no parochial organization, and proper steps were taken for the disjunction and erection of the new parish *quoad sacra* of Bellahouston, which was sanctioned by the Court of Session on 26th February, 1868. The successful ministry of Mr. Porter terminated in August, 1870, when he was appointed to the Parish of Maybole. A committee to look out for a new minister was then chosen, and, after careful deliberation, the Rev. Daniel Wright, of Jamestown, was elected as Mr. Porter's successor. During the ministry of Mr. Wright several important improvements were carried out. Amongst these may be mentioned the purchase of the Manse, 11 Ibrox Terrace, at Whitsunday, 1873. Early in 1874 a gentleman, Mr. Holms-Kerr, who took a deep interest in the church, offered an organ, which was gratefully accepted. Though the church was sufficiently large to meet the ordinary requirements of public worship, the absence of hall accommodation for Sabbath-school and other purposes was much felt. Accordingly, in 1885, it was resolved to erect halls in connection with the church, and the movement was greatly stimulated by the munificence of the Misses Steven, who not only gave the site, but also contributed a thousand pounds towards their erection. The halls were built during Mr. Wright's ministry, but he did not live to see them occupied. On the last Sunday of December, 1885, Mr. Wright conducted the evening service in the church, and on the morning of the following Thursday he died from congestion of the lungs. Once more a committee was

appointed to look out for a minister. The applications sent in were, as is usual in such cases, very numerous, and supported by a mass of testimonials, which increased the difficulty of making a selection. At length it was agreed that six of the candidates should be heard in the church, and one or two in neighbouring parishes. The result was the unanimous election of the Rev. John D. Douglas, of Foulden, on the 10th May, 1886. Nothing could be finer than the spirit in which Mr. Douglas conducted himself during his candidature, under circumstances of special delicacy, for his name had been mentioned and very favourably received in connection with another charge then vacant ; and the conditions in the contest at Bellahouston necessitated a certain rivalry not always free from temptation to excitement and jealousy. The Rev. T. B. W. Niven, of Pollokshields, Moderator during the vacancy, and W. R. Grieve, Esq., were appointed to prosecute the case before the Presbytery of Chirnside, to which Foulden belongs. After they had briefly stated their case, the Rev. W. Dobie, of Ladykirk, moved, and the Rev. J. A. Robertson seconded, the proposal of translation. The utmost regard for Mr. Douglas, and best wishes for his welfare and success in the new sphere of his ministry, were expressed by his brethren in the Presbytery. Mr. Douglas, in reply, said "that he felt very much the kindness of the remarks that had fallen alike from the representatives of the Glasgow Presbytery and Bellahouston congregation, and from his brethren and friends in the Presbytery of Chirnside. He came there a few years ago quite a young man, untried and unacquainted with many of the details of ministerial work, but found ready and valuable assistance from his seniors, and from the members of the Presbytery generally the utmost kindness and help.

"He did not feel, in accepting the call now placed in his hands, he was doing any slight to the parish he was leaving. The parish of Foulden was worthy of the best labour he could have given it his whole life long ; and he did not go from Foulden because he thought the sphere not large

enough or honourable enough. He felt he would have been honoured in spending his whole life at Foulden, but this call came from a parish which was in many respects a more important parish, and which had had the services of men whom he could not hope to equal. He might also say he was a native of Glasgow, and was educated in Glasgow ; and he looked on Glasgow with peculiar favour. Indeed, he thought there was no other place on earth to be compared with it. He thus felt the advantages of being so near his native city and his own *Alma Mater*. But he would not put personal grounds as the cause of his choice. There was really a higher power moving them ; and he was encouraged to believe that under God he might be able to do more work in the parish of Bellahouston than he could hope to do in his present charge, and looking to the unanimity of the call, he had no hesitation in accepting it. He parted with sincere regret from his friends and neighbours in the Presbytery of Chirnside."

On the 29th of June Mr. Douglas was inducted to his new charge. The day was bright and beautiful, and everything seemed to make the occasion auspicious. Friends came from distant places, and the gathering, particularly of young clergymen, was such as one seldom sees even on an induction day. There was also a large attendance of the congregation, and of friends from the district. The service, excellent in tone and spirit, was conducted by the Rev. J. Hay of Port-Dundas. After the induction many friends, accompanied by the young minister, dined in the George Hotel, where speeches, appropriate to the occasion, expressed the satisfaction of all concerned in the event of the day. In the evening a meeting of the congregation, for the purpose of receiving the new minister, was held in the newly-built halls, which, on this occasion, were used for the first time. The usual presentation of gown and books, to which was added a purse of sovereigns, was made in the course of the evening. Several suitable addresses were delivered by brother ministers, notable amongst which were the kindly suggestions of the Rev. Dr. Cameron, under whom

Mr. Douglas had formerly served at Kilmun, as to the way in which a young minister should be treated by his flock. At the close of the day the friends of Bellahouston parted in high expectation of the great things God would do for them by the hands of his servant. The manse, which had been vacant for several months, was in much need of repair, and it was arranged that the new minister should not occupy it till it had undergone thorough restoration. During the interval Mr. Douglas took up his abode with me for nearly two months. Though his temporary home was some two miles from his parish, and on the other side of the Clyde, yet he went daily to his district, and visited usually for several hours, returning late in the evening, often, we fear, without duly attending to his bodily wants. And here we may say what those who have had the pleasure of Mr. Douglas' presence in their homes will doubtless be able to confirm, that his quiet Christian influence amidst the family life, his chastened and instructive conversation, his unobtrusive demeanour, and, above all, his power as he led in prayer at the family altar, will not soon be forgotten. His eagerness for organizing the work of his new parish led him to overtask himself. He felt the grave responsibility of a city charge, and yearned to meet it to the utmost of his power. Hence the rapidity with which the several departments of church work were arranged and set in motion. The people were delighted with the energy which he displayed, and entered heartily into the projects initiated by their minister. During the few months of his being allowed to work in Bellahouston, he reconstructed the agencies of the church and created new developments of church life. The Sunday School, under his personal superintendence, had its numbers greatly augmented. A Bible Class was begun, with much promise. As in Foulden, so here, a Young Men's Guild was formed, which numbered at its first meeting a large proportion of the youths of the church, and which has gone on prospering ever since the minister's decease. A weekly Prayer Meeting on Thursdays was revived, and the good attend-

ance showed how heartily the service was appreciated. For his pulpit work in Bellahouston he prepared with even more than his usual care. He seemed to feel that, as the new charge brought increase of responsibility, so it required a fuller preparation. While staying in Ashton Terrace his custom was, when the Sabbath work was over, to select at once his topics for the following Sunday. The forenoons of the days were given to reading and study, and as the Sabbath approached, the well pondered thoughts would find effective expression in his carefully-written sermons, which were usually completed by the Friday, Saturday being chiefly given to their revision and to other parts of the service. The afternoon and evening he devoted to visitation, while to the morning hours of study were often added hours at night. Though only for four months minister of Bellahouston, he had succeeded in visiting a great many of his flock and, as has been amply testified since his death, won his way speedily to their hearts. After coming to Glasgow many invitations from brother ministers were sent requesting an exchange of pulpits, and to a few of these he consented; but so zealous was he for the work of his own congregation that, as a rule, he refused. He felt that his first duty was to build up and bind together the people to whose service God had appointed him.

He gladly assisted his ministerial friends when he could. A little before his death he was invited to preach in Edinburgh, on a week-day, at a service preparatory to the Communion. He consented, but the arrangement was likely to interfere with his prayer meeting, held on Thursday. He was anxious to return in time to conduct it himself, but feeling he might not be able to accomplish this, he wrote to me as follows:—

“ 11 Ibrox Terrace, Wednesday.

“ My Dear C——,

“ Just a line, as I am in a great hurry. Do, like a good fellow, be here to-morrow, Thursday, by at least 7.30; our meeting begins at eight o'clock *prompt*. Kindly be prepared to give us

something of your best, at the same time as little of a sermon and evangelistic address as a *biblical study*. Only avoid, perhaps, the parable of the vine, as I had it last week. I mean myself, *if at all possible*, to come home in time for the meeting. Also (unless I feel too exhausted by my preaching and railway journey that day) I would like to take the meeting myself. It is still so new and so much an experiment that the people may wish that and expect it; and if I feel equal to it I would be more comfortable. At the same time, as I am uncertain what may come in the way, I want to have you to fall back on. Of course, with another I could not say this, but you, my *alter ego*, will not be offended. Now, do kindly be here, and I shall try also to be here, at least by 7 or 7.30 to-morrow.—Ever yours.”

A dear friend, a country clergyman, had lost his young wife, and had asked him to conduct the funeral service. At the time he was busy with his visitation and church arrangements, and he would gladly have gone, but felt in duty that he could not do so. He wrote to him a letter of sympathy, which, for its delicacy and suggestiveness, is very interesting :—

“ Bellahouston, 11 Ibrox Terrace,

“ Glasgow, 4th October, 1886.

“ My Dear D——,

“ I am sorry it was out of my power sooner to write you, and say how sorry I was to be unable to be with you to do the last sad offices to your wife. I write this to express to you my deep and sincere sympathy with you in your loss. Though I had not the pleasure of knowing your wife, I know how much you must miss her, and how great a trial you must feel her death. I know how I would shrink from the pain of losing one so near, and yet it is the task, sooner or later, we have all to bear. And I believe it is best for us—that our love is all the greater and purer for the shadows that seem ever hanging on it; and we can still cherish it till Death, coming to ourselves, restores us all he took from us. You will pardon me saying so much, but I have myself been led to look in the face of the shadow. May God comfort and aid you, and even in your sorrow give you His peace.

“ Ever yours sincerely,

“ JOHN D. DOUGLAS.”

We also give two letters written to a lady friend residing at Strone:—

“ 2 Ashton Terrace, Dowanhill,
“ Glasgow, 29th July, 1886.

“ My Dear Mrs. H. A——,

“ I had hoped to have the pleasure of seeing you this week. Mr. K. purposed availing himself of your kind invitation, and I had hoped to accompany him. At the last moment, however, he was called away to Fife, and I found so much to do at Bellahouston I could not get away. I hope, however, to have an opportunity ere the summer altogether goes. Meantime I am very busy with visitation, &c., in my new parish, and my removal to the Manse will, I hope, take place in little more than a week. I am liking the church very much. I find the people also, all most kind and agreeable, and the musical service is extremely good. I found, in one of my calls yesterday, a family of which the mother had been brought up under Rev. Dr. K. in Paisley, and they had his photograph hung up in the room.

“ Yours most sincerely,

“ JOHN D. DOUGLAS.”

“ 2 Ashton Terrace, Dowanhill,
“ 6th August, 1886.

“ My Dear Mrs. H. A——,

“ I am quite ashamed that I have not replied to your kind letter before, but I have been so very busy, and I was waiting to see if I could pay you a visit, or at least take a run down for a day, and I waited to get time enough to write a good long letter—as I am afraid I am not going to find the leisure, I must write even at the risk of sending you a very hurried note. I am still busy at making calls, and then living so very far away, and having to see the manse put right, and the removal all to arrange, you will know how one gets no time for anything else. I felt it a great disappointment not going down a few weeks ago. Even then I was too busy to get away, but when Mr. K. came to me to ask me to pay with him his promised visit, I did all I could to try and arrange, though I did not feel comfortable, as I was leaving a good deal undone. I am still very busy in the beginning

of the week. The Manse is now about all ready, and I hope to get removed from Foulden. These and other things will occupy my time, but you may depend on my taking the earliest opportunity to avail myself of your kindness, and have the pleasure of visiting Woodside.

“With very kindest regards, in which Dr. C. joins,

“I am,

“Yours most sincerely,

“JOHN D. DOUGLAS.”

The work of the church being thoroughly organized, and preparations for the labour of the winter having been completed, he felt that before entering on these a little rest might be taken with advantage. Accordingly, only a week before his death, he arranged to make a visit to his friends at the coast. He stayed a few days at Woodside, Strone. On the day of his arrival, the gardener was cutting down trees. As he looked on the leaves lying scattered about, he thought of the text “We all do fade as a leaf,” and he then selected the subject which turned out to be that of his last sermon. As an interesting coincidence, it may be mentioned that many years ago the late Dr. M’Culloch, of Greenock, while visiting in the autumn at Strone, chose the same text—a fact which was mentioned to Mr. Douglas by his friends, and which doubtless had something to do with the selection of the subject so fitting for his last sermon. It was a time of pleasant rest, blended with healthful recreation. His friends were delighted to see him again. During this visit he performed his last baptism. The parents, anxious that Mr. Douglas should baptise their child, had deferred the ceremony till his coming. Amongst the few visits that his limited time allowed him to make, we would mention that made at Finnartmore, the summer home of Dr. F. L. Robertson. Mr. Douglas was photographed by the young ladies, who take a great interest in this pleasing art. The doctor’s gown and hood were at hand, and Mr. Douglas playfully suggested that he should put on these articles for the occasion, remarking that he was D. D. already, these being

the last two initials of his name. Accordingly, the photograph found at the opening of this chapter was taken. It is a very good likeness, and is specially interesting as having been done so near to his death. He would have prolonged his stay, but his engagements would not permit him to do so, and having promised to return soon, he came back to town.

On Saturday evening, 6th November, he was sitting alone in his study, having finished his last sermon, based on the text, "We all do fade as a leaf."—Isaiah lxiv. 6. He was jaded and worn, and the exhaustion of body had reacted on his mind. I had called, and finding him thus depressed, urged him to accompany me and spend an hour with a lady and gentleman who were to have tea at my house. He was reluctant to comply, but at last consented. A pleasant afternoon was spent, and the four friends being well known to each other chatted on till the evening was advanced, and when the time of separation came, the lady asked, "When shall we four meet again?" We thought nothing of the phrase, so often used when friends part, but I promised that I would call soon, and take Mr. Douglas with me. So we parted, not here to meet again. On Sabbath morning he was unrefreshed by the night's rest, but he went through the Church services without any appreciable sign of weakness. In the afternoon, he was more worn, and towards evening he felt ill, but said nothing about it, as he was resolved to preach. Many who were in Church observed the exhausted appearance of their Minister, as he delivered his last sermon, from the text, which seemed as if put into his hands for the occasion, "We all do fade as a leaf." The sermon will be found in the collection at the end. After service, he informed some of the church friends in the vestry that he did not feel quite so well as usual. He hastened home, and laid himself down upon the sofa in his little sitting-room. Here I found him, complaining of severe internal pain. He was put to bed, and placed under treatment at once. Throughout the night the symptoms abated, and in the morning he seemed a little better, but

as evening wore on, an unfavourable change took place. Monday night was restless, and marked signs of great nervous depression appeared. On the morning of Tuesday, again there seemed to be a slight improvement, but as the day advanced we were deprived of that encouragement. Tuesday night was like its predecessor, but more pronounced in its character. On Wednesday the vital power was clearly ebbing, still unremitting efforts were continued, in the hope that the dreaded catastrophe might be averted. Towards midnight, it became evident that he was to be called hence, and it was my painful duty to inform him. "My dear John," I said, "you are going to leave us." He answered, as with an angel's resignation he looked at me, "It's all right, my dear fellow, I am ready." His father and mother were in the room, and with them the little domestic so long in the family. I made to them the terrible announcement as best I could. It was half-past twelve, midnight darkness was in the room, thick and deep, it could be felt. Over our hearts it crept, with icy coldness, and we all felt as if we would join him in his departure. Yet it was not all black, there was light in the dwelling, for on that dying bed lay one who was passing a conqueror through the domain of the King of Terrors, and on his brow was written, as he himself had entered in his diary of long ago, "At eventide it shall be light." He called his mother, and laying his hand on her head, patted her fondly, and prayed that God would keep and bless her, his dear, dear mother, the best of mothers, and grant her to join him in heaven. Having spoken like words to the rest, he prayed for the Church, pleading that God would find for them a faithful minister, to carry on his work in that parish. Addressing me, he said, "Give a book to each of my friends," and to the little company, "I wish you four to be together." When he had thus spoken, a short time of restlessness supervened. He tossed from side to side, complained of the cold, but at length became soothed, and lying with his face turned towards the window, composed as if for sleep, his eyes looking steadily forward, as though

he were already gazing on the realities beyond, he entered the Great Unseen, "like one that wraps the drapery of his couch around him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

Sleep, sleeper, sleep ! thy well-earned rest
 We would nor grudge nor disallow ;
 Obedient to thy Lord's behest,
 Repose upon His bosom now.

Sleep, sleeper, sleep ! nor shall we say
 Thy life was short, thy call too soon ;
 Life's length runs never by the day,
 God's call is ever opportune.

Sleep, sleeper, sleep ! the rolling year
 Will give us back what now we mourn ;
 Loss yield to gain, and every tear
 To pure and sparkling crystal turn.

Sleep, sleeper, sleep ! the 'tender, true,'
 Like Douglas of another's muse,
 Who wrote unwittingly of you,
 And told the world before, thy dues.

Sleep, sleeper, sleep ! my peerless friend,
 Why should I beg thee back to me ?
 Since thou dost rest, I'll bide the end,
 And keep the tryst I made with thee.

Sleep, sleeper, sleep ! nor may thy dust
 Cry clamorous for its sainted soul :
 And my sad heart no more distrust,
 But leave his peace untroubled, whole.

Sleep, brother, sleep ! sleep, noble son !
 Sleep, patriot heart ! sleep, loyal friend !
 Sleep, till our world his course hath run.
 Sleep, till our race hath reached its end.

Sleep, scholar ripe ! thy books laid past ;
 Sleep, gentle shepherd of the sheep,
 Sleep till He comes—the First, the Last—
 Who ‘giveth His beloved sleep.’

Till then, sleep on in peaceful sleep !
 Let angels hush thy slumb’ring dust ;
 And Zion’s Watchman safe will keep,
 In solemn guard, that sacred trust.

Then wake, no more to sleep in death,
 Resplendent with God’s glorious form,
 Rise, glowing in immortal breath,
 And hail with joy the deathless morn.

The unexpected and terrible event came like a shock to the people of Bellahouston. It was hardly possible to realise the fact that the young and beloved minister, who in so brief a time had found his way to so many hearts—who had given such promise, and from whom so much was expected—was dead ! Yet, it was so ; within four short days, the servant, who had ministered to God’s people on earth, was called to His service in heaven. He, as in Milton’s lofty line, who had learned

“ To scorn delights, and live laborious days,”

fell, in his three-and-thirtieth year, by “ the blind Fury with the abhorred shears ” that “ slits the thin-spun life.” Great was the grief, not only among his own flock, who were anguish-smitten, but also through the district for miles around. Many were the expressions of sympathy that poured in upon the disconsolate and childless mother. He was her all—almost her idol—and to part with him was more bitter than to part with life. Everything that friendly service could do was done to soften the hard blow. Friends and strangers vied with each other in their efforts, personally or by letter, to comfort—if that had been possible—the comfortless.

On Sabbath, the 14th November, the church was closed, and the day was observed, as befitted a time of mourning, in the seclusion of home. On the following Sabbath,

November 21st, funeral sermons were preached in the church. In the morning the Rev. David Millar, of St. John's Parish, Glasgow, under whom Mr. Douglas sat while a student, and with whom he also laboured as church missionary, preached an earnest and impressive discourse from John xi. verse 11—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." In the evening the Rev. John Barr Service, of Bolton, Haddington, conducted the service. Mr. Douglas had been intimately associated with Mr. Service while in Kilmun; their parishes joined, and thus a strong and lasting intimacy sprung up between them. He preached from the text 1 Cor. xi. 1—"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." In closing he said:—

"I first became acquainted with Mr. Douglas when, on leaving college, he was chosen assistant to Dr. Cameron, and came to live near me at Kilmun. Since then our friendship has been close and valued, and though we were afterwards chosen to distant parishes, time and distance only drew us closer together in sympathy and mutual respect. He regretted much that his lot had been cast so far away from his friends, and one pleasure that he promised himself in coming amongst you, was that he might renew the pleasant companionship of former days—a pleasure which has proved short-lived indeed. It was impossible to know Mr. Douglas without loving him, and being infected with his own hopeful, joyous, and earnest spirit. Though his ministry here was so short, I was not unprepared for the spectacle I witnessed last Monday, when a whole people mourned for their lost friend, with no formal grief, but with hearts stirred to their depths. He carried with him an atmosphere of sweetness which did good to all who breathed it, and awakened a similar feeling in them. His conversation carried the same pure, sweet tone as did his preaching—equally free from foolish jesting and pedantic display; and when his deeper feelings were stirred in those long and solemn conversations we occasionally had, when the inner spirit that our cold Northern nature hides from display came shyly into view, I was sometimes startled and abashed at the lofty and noble nature it unfolded, feeling how it rebuked my own coldness and weakness. His mind was ever active in the pursuit of truth and virtue. It was Catholic in the real sense of that word, going out on all sides after what bore the

stamp of Christ's spirit, rejecting no truth because it may have come from a contaminated source, but accepting all that was in conformity with God's spirit, which he felt to be present everywhere. His preaching and conversation showed a cultivated mind, which delighting not in controversy, obeyed the apostle's injunction and thought on those things which were pure and lovely and of good report; while his writing had a literary grace and finish which displayed a familiar acquaintance with whatever is best in literature. But what most of all characterised him, and shall ever remain with me as the spiritual likeness of my friend, was his purity, sweetness, and charity. His was one of those rare and happy natures which turn instinctively to the light rather than to the darkness. When he had occasion to reprehend any sin, he did it with firm but gentle accent, which indicated rather that the conception of the sin had entered into his mind, than that it had any hold upon his nature. His mind easily threw off the contaminations of life and thought that are so prevalent in those days, passing like a sunbeam unpolluted by the corruption among which it moves. In his thoughts and judgments he ever remembered the charity that beareth all things and thinketh no evil.

‘ Strict to himself, of other men no spy,
He made himself no circuit judge to try
The lighter conscience of his neighbour by.’

He followed the example of his Master, seeking to drive out evil by teaching and doing good more than by threatening and denouncing wickedness, though he did not refuse to do that, even at much pain to himself, when duty called. He felt that the world was to be saved by preaching the glad tidings of great joy, that the spirit of love was the conquering force in Christianity, that by holding up to man's view in word and life Christ Jesus, and Him crucified, he was more truly doing the work of his Master than by combating directly the errors and sins of man. But now he is gone, where his own bright spirit shall be pained no more by the visions of darkness and vice which here we see. We remain with one sweet, brave heart fewer to help and encourage us; yet though our hearts ache, and our eyes are dim with tears, we shall not murmur overmuch because our loving Father has taken to Himself him whom we would gladly have kept a little longer. Shall we not rather acquiesce in the feeling expressed by a hymn which he read with delighted appreciation the week before he died—

‘ Sleep on, beloved, sleep, and take thy rest ;
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour’s breast ;
We love thee well ; but Jesus loves thee best.

Good night.

‘ Calm is thy slumber as an infant’s sleep ;
But thou shalt wake, no more to toil and weep ;
Thine is the perfect rest, secure and deep.

Good night.

‘ Until the shadow from this earth is cast,
Until He gathers in His sheaves at last,
Until the twilight gloom is overpast,

Good night.

‘ Until the Easter glory lights the skies,
Until the dead in Jesus shall arise,
And He shall come, but not in lowly guise,

Good night.

‘ Until made beautiful by love divine,
Thou in the likeness of thy Lord shall shine,
And He shall bring that golden crown of thine,

Good night.

‘ Only good night, beloved, not farewell ;
A little while and all His saints shall dwell
In hallowed union indivisible.

Good night.

‘ Until we meet again before His throne,
Clothed in the spotless robes He gives His own,
Until we know, even as we are known,

Good night.’”

As indicating the deep impression made on the young of the parish by the death of their minister, the following simple and touching lines, written by one of his Sabbath-school, a young lady of 14, will be read with interest:—

“ *‘We all do fade as a leaf.’*

“ Alone in a darkened chamber, his noble head laid low,
Lay one of God’s own workers, with his beautiful marble brow,
Touched by his Master’s fingers, shining with radiant love ;
But ’twas only the empty casket, for his soul had flown above.

“ Sleeping, yes, only sleeping, till the judgment day shall come ;
Let not your hearts be troubled, for his Father hath called him
home,

Home to the glorious beauty of the golden city above,
Where naught can ever enter but joy, and peace, and love.

“ He was so faithful and earnest—working through good and through ill—

Guiding the rich or lowly, obeying the Master’s will ;
Following in His footsteps, looking towards his Lord,
And now, when the toil is over, he has gone to meet his reward.

“ Yet, still it is hard to lose him, his grieving flock will say ;
But he’s only gone before us ; and until the judgment day,
We will live in hopes to see him ; but his earthly work is done—
He is praising his Father in heaven, and our pastor’s crown is won ! ”

The day of the funeral was Monday, 15th November. A number of friends met in the Manse, where a service was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Leckie, Ibrox U.P. Church, and Rev. J. T. Graham, Dean Park Parish Church, Govan. A service was also conducted in the Church, a large congregation having assembled for the purpose, and the people melted into tears as the oak coffin, covered with wreaths, was carried up the aisle, and laid on the communion table. After the service, the lengthy cortege slowly formed, which consisted of numerous carriages, followed, for a considerable distance, by many people on foot. The road was lined with spectators, the shops in the district were closed, and the blinds of the neighbouring houses were lowered, while the bells tolled their melancholy accompaniment. Even nature seemed to mourn, for all the way to the cemetery, the heavens wept, and while we were consigning the remains of our friend to their last resting-place, the showers fell, as if to join the sad offices of earth with the sympathy of heaven. Not only in Glasgow, but in many places in Scotland, did this unexpected calamity spread a feeling of the profoundest sorrow, which found expression in a variety of forms. The Presbytery of Chirnside, of which Mr. Douglas had been for three years a member, recorded in their supplement to *Life and Work*, the following expression of their sympathy:—

“ *Extract from the Supplement for the Parishes of Chirnside Presbytery, December, 1886.*

“ Our readers must have learned with deep regret the early

death of Mr. Douglas, formerly minister of Foulden. He was known in almost every parish in this Presbytery, and was much liked wherever he was known. He came to his parish well equipped for the work of the ministry, and entered upon his duties with greater energy and success than most young men are given to experience. With a humble idea of his own personality, yet magnifying his office, he was not restrained by that morbid modesty which causes many young ministers to hold aloof when they might most usefully assert themselves. He had a deep-rooted faith in the Christian Church as the vehicle of Salvation to all the ends of the earth. Whilst appreciating other forms of church government, he was convinced of the special fitness of Presbyterianism to the genius of the Scottish people. Whilst giving due credit to the sects which have parted from the Church of Scotland, he believed that in that Church's connection with the State there was an untold and unspeakable benefit to the nation. He was therefore proud to be a minister of the Church, and he rejoiced in the mission to which, in the good Providence of God, he had been called. There never seemed to be any doubt in his mind that God had given that Church its place in the land, or that God had given himself his place in that Church. Thus it was that he at once entered on the work of his parish, feeling that, though small, its interests were to him of paramount importance. It was the one part of the vineyard to which he was directly responsible, and it was his constant desire and endeavour that it should prosper in his hands. But, whilst doing his best for his own parish, he was always ready to help elsewhere: and, if other congregations knew how excellent his services were, the ministers of those parishes knew also how willingly and heartily those services were rendered. If he took a prominent part in discussing the question of Disestablishment, it was because he believed the assailants of the Church did not realize what they were doing, or what great injustice to the deserving poor was involved in their proposals. When Mr. Douglas left Foulden, he was peculiarly sensitive lest the parishioners he was leaving might fancy that he had no interest in their welfare. We believe he held them very dear even to the end. Any Christian minister worthy of the name has always a warm feeling for his first parish, which no future associations can ever chill. Mr. Douglas went to Bellahouston in the same spirit of enthusiasm with which he

came to Foulden. He felt able for more active and stirring work than any he had yet been privileged to do. He felt that his three years of quiet country duty had been preparing him for other things. He believed that God was calling him to labour in another portion of His vineyard, where the divine Spirit would attend him and the divine blessing help him as they had done before. Not in any self-sufficient spirit did he return to the city where he had been brought up, and which he still loved with all his heart. He went in all humility and with great anxiety, doubting much whether he were sufficient for such things, but never doubting that it was his duty to quit himself as best he might, believing that God would assuredly perfect his strength in His servant's weakness, and leaving the issue trustfully in his Master's hands. We have heard how he laboured in that new sphere. We have heard how he gave himself to the work. We have heard how he persevered in it even after his fatal illness had laid hold on him. We have heard how he left the pulpit to go home and lie down and die. We know now that his was the right sort of enthusiasm—not a fitful flash, but a steady glow—never failing until that moment in which the enthusiasm of loving service was exchanged for the peace and gladness of heavenly rest. We may mourn in sympathy for his now childless mother, bereft of a son who was loving and good and true; but we may not mourn for the son himself, who has exchanged the story of Faith and Hope for the fulness of divine love. No better lot can fall to any minister of the Christian Church than to be called away in the midst of activity and usefulness. The living man may think that the work of the Kingdom needs him still—that his heart and hand can ill be spared; but the dying man knows that God's work goes on for ever—that another worker will arise where he has fallen—that the glory of proclaiming the gospel is handed on from man to man—and that his own life is not ending prematurely, but simply because God's purpose in it has been fulfilled.

“We have ventured to say these things in the name of the Presbytery, within whose bounds by far the greatest part of Mr. Douglas' ministerial life was spent. It is especially fitting that in these pages we should give a few thoughts to his memory. His heart was much set upon the commencement of this ‘Supplement’ to *Life and Work*, as a likely means of stimulating the life and work of the parishes within our bounds, and he gladly undertook

to edit it when as yet it was only a doubtful experiment. It must have been uphill work, and sometimes disappointing; but his characteristic faith stood him in good stead here as elsewhere. Up to the last day of his connection with the Presbytery, when the bustle of preparation for departure might have excused him for delegating the work to other hands, he continued to take charge of the 'Supplement,' and the last number which he edited was the most successful of the whole. At his earnest request a copy has been sent to him every month since he left us. He felt sure that the 'Supplement' would live, and he desired to watch its progress. He was to have sent an occasional contribution to its pages whenever leisure would permit; but he was so overwhelmed with work, or, rather, he so overwhelmed himself with work, that that leisure never came. And now his pen is laid aside for ever. But though he may not now address us by either tongue or pen, he has not lived for us in vain. All of us who knew him, or heard his voice, or read his words, will continue to thank God for his brief and loving ministry."

The following formed the close of a Sermon preached in Foulden Church on 14th November by his successor there, the Rev. John Reid:—

"Brethren, I cannot close my discourse to-day without reference to your late minister, the Rev. John D. Douglas. He has been uppermost in all our thoughts ever since we read a fatal paragraph in the newspapers regarding him. Not many weeks ago his voice was heard within these walls; and doubtless its familiar tones awakened many a happy memory, and rekindled many a glowing aspiration after that higher life which Christianity reveals. But the ways of Providence are unsearchable, and sometimes those who are doing the best work for God and their fellow-men are cut off in the midst of their usefulness. This has been the case with Mr. Douglas. He is dead; but he dies revered by all who knew him. His kindness, his amiability, his unfailing attention to the calls of duty, his thorough Christian principles have won their way to many a heart. It is not for me to speak of his abilities, these are widely known and have been thoroughly recognised and valued in this quiet parish where he began his ministry. Yet he is not entirely lost to us. Death cannot kill the loving memory of his goodness, or tear from the heart the

heavenly seed which his hand has planted. He is with us still in the work which he has done, and we feel assured that a more than earthly reward is his. 'They that bring many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.'

In the Parish Church of Swinton, on Sunday, 14th November, the Rev. Mr. Gordon, preaching from St. John i. 47, "Behold an Israelite, indeed, in whom is no guile," said:—

"In closing these remarks, I feel that it would be inappropriate to do so without a brief reference to one who has exercised to a greater or less extent an influence on your lives, and who has passed away in the week that has gone. I allude to Mr. Douglas, the late minister of Foulden. By his hands I was set apart to labour among you in the work of the holy ministry. Not infrequently have you heard his voice speaking to you from this pulpit, and on the evening of a recent Communion Sabbath you may recall how ably and earnestly he addressed us from the far too appropriate text 'We all do fade as a leaf.' Knowing Mr. Douglas as an intimate personal friend, it is difficult for me to speak of his attainments, or to add my tribute of affection to his memory. But this I will say, from frequent converse with him, that his was a spirit singularly frank and open, a mind true, genuine, and clear, that his ruling characteristic was that of simplicity like unto Nathanael, in whom was no guile. Oftimes the poor have spoken of his kindly heart, and in the hour of distress they never turned to him for sympathy in vain. But much as he loved Foulden, the place and the people, much as he was loved by them, his active spirit yearned for the larger life and fuller activity of a city pastorate. It was with great pleasure that his friends heard that he had obtained a call to a charge in a rising suburb of Glasgow. It was my privilege to be present at his induction, and never saw I proceedings more enthusiastic, or welcome more hearty extended to any minister. Little is it to be wondered at that if, on that bright June day, we predicted for him a happy and brilliant career, and congratulated the people on the pastor of their choice. But the Lord had need of him, and we say this in simple faith, for to mortal eye many of us could have been better spared from the work. But when we raise our thoughts on high, and behold Him who doeth all things well, while we

ask the Divine consolation for the bereaved friends and sorrowing congregation, we will take courage in our Christian path. Though the labourer in the vineyard faint and grow weary, yet the golden vintage will be gathered in; though the soldier fall in the battle, yet the Lord's victory will be gained; and though the great and good die, though one generation passeth away one after another, yet the word of our God abideth for ever."

In the Parish Church, Dunoon, on Sabbath, 14th November, the Rev. Dr. Cameron, with whom Mr. Douglas had been assistant prior to his going to Foulden, said—

"I know that the minds of many of you, may I not almost say of all of you, are tinged with sadness to-day. Two days ago we were all startled with the sad intelligence that one who was much beloved by us all, and who so faithfully and powerfully preached the gospel of Christ in this pulpit as my coadjutor and assistant, was suddenly called home. Little more than three years ago, it was my privilege to introduce Mr. Douglas to the beautiful country parish of Foulden, and only in July last he asked me to perform the same duty again when he was inducted to the parish of Bellahouston, in Glasgow. During the time he was here, I need not tell you how acceptable he was in his pulpit ministrations, how faithfully and zealously he performed all the other duties of his sacred office. We loved him much, because he was a most lovable man—one upon whom God had bestowed noble gifts, which he nobly dedicated to the Master's service. Personally, my intercourse with him was not only most pleasant, but most profitable. He was so well read, so intelligent, so guileless, so gentle, I would almost say one that gave you a true idea of Apostolic saintliness. When I left him in his new parish a few months ago, his soul was fired with the truest and noblest ambition that can animate the soul of man—the ambition to be a true preacher of righteousness, and to serve the Lord Christ in the important field to which he was called. He complained that in his former sphere he had too little work. In a note I had yesterday from the Convener of the Committee that recommended him to the congregation he said that everything was so prosperous; he seemed as if he had entered on his proper sphere, where a career of eminent usefulness was opened up to him. But God decreed otherwise. He preached in his own pulpit on Sunday

last with his wonted fervour, and to-day he lies cold in the sleep of death. I regret much that our solemn services here next Sunday will prevent me from acceding to the request presented to me last night of preaching his funeral sermon. It would have been a painful duty to me, but had I been free, I should have had a melancholy pleasure in bearing my humble testimony to the sterling worth of my dear and much-loved friend, and of expressing my heartiest sympathy with his mourning friends and relatives, and especially with his fond mother—of whom he often spoke in the most affectionate terms—in their sad and sore bereavement. His last words were that he was going home, and that he knew that higher work was before him there. Let us try to lay the solemn lesson his sudden removal is teaching us seriously to heart—work while it is day, remembering that neither youth nor talent can save us when our hour has come.”

At the close of the forenoon service on Sabbath, 14th Nov., in Dean Park Parish Church, Govan, the Rev. J. T. Graham made reference to the lamented death of Mr. Douglas. In preaching from the 39th Psalm, 9th verse, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,” he said:—

“In saying these words we can not but think of one who only last Sunday was in full health, but now rests from his labours, and for whose loss not a few are this day seeking, I trust, in their sorrow to say these words of our text from the heart. To-day the doors of a neighbouring parish church are closed and the voice of upraised supplication is silent there, out of loving respect to the memory of its departed minister, whose career, so full of bright promise, already bearing fruit, God has seen fit to close in death. Only about four months ago was he chosen their minister by the hearty and unanimous vote of the congregation, and so soon has it pleased God to sever the bond between pastor and people. As members with them of the body of Christ, His Church, we would sorrow in their loss, and offer them our loving sympathy. Not altogether unknown to you was their late pastor. No longer since than this day five weeks you were interested and edified by his winning and earnest counsel. On Sunday last he performed the full duty in his own church, and the final text in which he was permitted to set forth divine truth to his people was one it has

pleased God he should solemnly illustrate in a way little dreamt of then, the exhortation of Isaiah, 'We all do fade as a leaf.' Not till he became minister of Bellahouston was I privileged to meet him, but all who knew him will agree with me that after each interview we felt we had met with a Christian, a scholar, and a gentleman. Regarding his ministry, the brief space of four months in his new parish affords us little material for comment, but even in that short time we can recognise the same energy and success attending his work here as in his former quiet pastoral parish. Already he had organised numerous branches of church work, drawn around him many young people in Sunday school and Bible class, with an ever-increasing and appreciative congregation, and now after a short illness of three days, the busy hand and brain are stilled, the proposed plans and work are left standing as an unfinished structure where no sound of axe or hammer is to be heard."

On Sunday, the 21st November, the Rev. J. A. Robertson, of Whitsome, preached in Foulden Parish Church, from Acts ix. 6, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and 1st Samuel iii. 10, "Speak, for Thy servant heareth." Referring to the unexpected death of their late minister, he said:—

"When it was arranged that I should preach here to-day, there was no thought of anything special in the service; but when your present minister, a few days ago, requested that I should take special notice of a sad event which has recently taken place, and which is now weighing upon all your spirits, I had to bethink myself in what connection I should make the reference. I could not think of using a discourse already on hand, and merely adding to it a few remarks regarding our departed friend. I felt that in some way the whole sermon should be permeated by his spirit, setting forth the lesson which his own life conveyed. And when, on turning over the pages of the Bible for some appropriate text, my eye fell upon that great question of the Apostle Paul, I felt at once that here was the proper theme. I did not wish to speak to you of death, or to suggest thoughts which might make you sad and spiritless; but, knowing well that you were sad and depressed already, I wished to speak to you of life and action, a life of faith in God, and work to be done for Him. It seemed to me that in this way I should

best do honour to your late minister, and should also best impress you with the lesson of his life. The picture which I would fain hold up to you is that of the pure-minded, high-souled, warm-hearted, and faithful man of God, one who desired to spend and be spent in Christian effort, for the glory of God and for the good of men. You know better than I can tell you how anxious he was for your spiritual welfare, how earnestly he gave himself to his pulpit preparations, how full his sermons were of thoughts both beautiful and manly, how thoroughly they were imbued with the spirit of faith, and hope, and charity, how they set the gospel before you as the message of a true redemption which should purify the soul from sin, and fill it with Christian spirit and divine life. You know that his preaching always encouraged what was good in you, and always showed whatever was evil. You know that he both dreamed of, and aimed at, a life of Christian brotherhood, in which all who named the name of Christ should dwell together in peace and unity. You know how pleasant he was in your homes, not because he set himself to be pleasant, but because it was utterly foreign to his nature to be otherwise. You know how true he was in word and deed—even, some would say, to the verge of simplicity, but for the certainty that it was not the result of weakness. You know, too, how, whilst he did not disdain to share of your hours of gladness, he counted it his greatest privilege to be present with you in your hours of sorrow, imparting gleams of consolation and comfort which you received the more readily because they were the outcome of his own faith. You know how he could adapt himself alike to the expanding intelligence of childhood, and to the decaying energies of advancing age. You know, in short, how thoroughly his heart was with you, and how, in turn, he heartily rejoiced in your expressions of regard for him. And, when he left you, I am confident that he left no enemy behind him, and am prepared to believe that every one in the parish had become his friend. His nature was a rare combination of gentleness and manliness. I have known few men who have so laid hold in so short a time of all the people with whom he came in contact. I have known few men whose death has called forth such universal, such strong, such unmistakable expressions of regret. One minister wrote to me, ‘I am sure you would be shocked to hear of the

death of poor Douglas. I can scarcely realise it, and, when I do, it is to awaken feelings of profound regret that our Church has lost such an able and efficient minister.' Another wrote, 'You would be shocked greatly to hear of poor Douglas' death. It came to us here like a thunderbolt. We had no idea of anything wrong, and the first intimation was the unrelieved announcement in the newspaper. It is very sad and strange to see one in whom there was so much good, and whose life was so full of beauty and promise, so soon taken away.' And so it goes on. Almost every letter I have had during the last week has been in the same strain, the strain of lamentation over a loss which was felt to be personal, but which was felt to affect the whole community as well. We all loved him, we all follow him with our keen regrets, we all think, it may be, that his place cannot easily be supplied. Not thus, however, does his life speak to us. It exhorts us rather to follow in that cause which made himself so true, and gentle, and bright, and lovable. It admonishes us to wait ever on the high behest of God, asking with Saul—'Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?' and saying with Samuel, 'Speak, Lord! thy servant heareth.' Let our regrets be transformed into seeds of holiness, which shall grow up and blossom, and bring forth fruit in an after life. Thus shall we best do honour to the youthful man of God who has passed so suddenly away."

We have also much pleasure in giving an extract from a letter sent us by the Rev. Mr. Milne of Gourrock:—

"I was a member of the Presbytery of Chirnside when Mr. Douglas was elected minister of Foulden, and took part in his ordination to that holy office. He entered heartily on his duties in that quiet country parish, and soon became a great favourite both there and in all the parishes of the Presbytery. About six months after Mr. Douglas' settlement I was translated to my present charge. I saw him frequently since and had arranged with him to assist me at my last Communion (12th December). In reply to my request that he should do so, he wrote to the effect that he had been very busy since he came to Bellahouston, and had been declining all requests to preach elsewhere, but that he could not decline mine, but would be with me on the day named, expressing a desire to obtain good supply for his own pulpit. At a meeting of my Kirk-Session on 10th November, I was asked whom I was

likely to have to assist me at my Communion, and my elders were all greatly pleased on hearing it was to be the new and popular minister of Bellahouston. You will easily understand our great grief and dismay when we read in the newspapers of the 12th that he had died on the 11th of November. Mr. Douglas was not much known in Gourrock, but it had become pretty generally known that he was to be at our Communion, and his sudden death came as a great shock upon us, and has left a deep impression—the subject being referred to in other Churches besides my own. Your congregation will deeply deplore the loss of such a minister as Mr. Douglas—so genuine, so unassuming, so devoted, and so considerate to all. His ministry, either among yourselves or at Foulden, has not been long, but it has been to some purpose. Measured by the amount of work done—measured above all, if that were possible, by the impression made—it might be found equal to the longest. His enthusiastic spirit has passed into many and has generated a like enthusiasm in them, and they will carry on and extend his work, having received even a diviner and more powerful impulse from his death. ‘Being dead he yet speaks’—speaks more impressively than ever before.

‘We live in deeds not years, in thoughts not breaths,
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.’ ”

Many other expressions of sympathy were sent to Mr. Douglas' mother, and from these we shall give two selections. One gentleman, who knew him well, says, “I had frequent opportunities of meeting Mr. Douglas, both in public and in private. The Church, nay, the world, is poorer for the loss of your son. Let the memory of his bright and manly career be some consolation, until, in God's good time, you are called to meet him where partings are unknown.” Another friend, a clergyman, and old college companion, writes to a lady, a friend of Mr. Douglas', who was greatly distressed on hearing of his death, “What a good man he was! I never knew any one like him. He will live in minds made noble by his presence.” We might add, were it necessary, many other testimonies to show to those, who had no personal knowledge of our friend, that the language of this narrative is justified by the excellence of the man.



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BELLAHOUSTON PARISH CHURCH

CHAPTER VII.

AFTER this brief sketch of the chief events in the life of Mr. Douglas, it only remains, that we should attempt to convey to those who had not the privilege of knowing him some outline of what he was as a man—of his leading characteristics, physical, mental, and moral.

The personal appearance of Mr. Douglas was striking. Above the average, considerably, in height, his slender form made him seem taller than he really was. He generally walked with a swinging step, umbrella or stick in hand, like a man who had business to do. His favourite dress was the clerical black, which so well became him—a long coat ending a little below the knees, together with a soft broad-rimmed hat, which well agreed with his dark complexion and handsome face. His head was much above the average in size, and impressed the observer with its proportions, especially as to the upper part, which was elegantly vaulted and covered with a rich profusion of dark brown, almost black, hair. His face was such as one seldom sees, and it attracted the notice of an artist who chanced to be present at his induction to Bellahouston, when many young clergymen were assisting. His brow, well-formed and manly, though not unduly large, under his clustering hair, the hazel eyes glistening with intelligence, and in animated discourse shining with a special lustre, the characteristic nose, large, but proportionate, the well-formed mouth with its moustache and carefully trimmed beard, presented a striking combination. A lady said of his face that, when she looked at Douglas, she was always reminded of Dante. His manner was as winning as it was artless. Naturally and without effort he seemed to please everyone. He was able at once to win his way to

the heart of the child, and to attract the less impressible affection of the aged. To all ranks and classes he was equally accessible and equally courteous. His social instinct enabled him to enter with hearty sympathy into whatever concerned his friends. His love for his mother formed one of the most prominent features in his character. From his earliest days he looked up to her with affectionate trust and veneration, and in numberless ways displayed the depth of his filial devotion, laying in his boyhood plans for making his mother happy, and in more mature years ever ready to direct his movements and modify his projects in subservience to the same guiding aim. This affection for his mother early imbued him with profound respect for woman's place and dignity, and made him shrink from aught approaching levity or jest in dealing with such topics on the few occasions when less scrupulous companions ventured to trench on his sensitiveness. He often remarked on the place given to women in the Gospel. When some years ago the White Cross movement was brought into prominence he heartily entered into its warfare against impurity. He often dwelt upon the principle and promise of the Beatitude—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

His friendships were many and lasting. No one who found a place in his heart ever lost it, save when a rare case of gross ingratitude compelled a change of feeling, and even then there was little resentment. His friends vied with each other in their regard for him, and appreciation of the privilege of intimacy with him. His love of home amounted almost to a passion. Though his desire for knowledge excited a longing for travel, he could not be drawn away for any length of time from the familiar faces of his own fireside. His conversational powers were remarkable. Ever diffident of himself, and considerate towards others, he would quietly and gradually take part in the conversation till the company would be content often simply to listen. His varied culture set off his natural powers to the best advantage. The absence

of affectation, and his freedom from pedantry, prevented the too common errors of brilliant conversationalists from marring the pleasure of his gift. His reading was wide in its range. He held liberal views as to the kind of books that should be read; while he evinced discrimination in his method of reading, skimming with a rapid glance lighter literature, but reserving for more thoughtful perusal what seemed of greater weight. Scott was his favourite among novelists, and there was nothing in his writings with which Mr. Douglas was not familiar. The quaint and powerful portraits of character drawn by this master hand, and the inimitable descriptions with which his writings abound, were to Douglas an unfailing source of delight. A lecture on Sir Walter Scott, delivered by him in various places, was one of his happiest efforts, and showed how deeply he had drunk at the charmed fount of the wondrous wizard. Among later novelists the works of Dickens probably made the deepest impression. The writings of John Shorthouse, on account of their metaphysical character and finish, afforded great enjoyment, more especially "John Inglesant."

In the domain of poetry Mr. Douglas took a peculiar pleasure. He was himself a poet, and the poetic taste early unfolded itself. While he was yet a lad Wordsworth's ode on the "Intimations of Immortality" charmed him, and in his evening walks he would often quote the magnificent introduction and recite other parts of the poem. Wordsworth retained a place of honour in his affections to the last. His admiration for Shakespeare rested on an intimate acquaintance with his creations. Among the tragedies "Hamlet" was his favourite, while in the comedies the "Merchant of Venice" held a similar place. He specially appreciated the "Sonnets," many of which he had committed to memory. Milton's minor poems greatly impressed him. The ode on "The Nativity" was very precious to him, and he always recited it as Christmas came round. "Lycidas" was also a great favourite, as was Shelley's beautiful creation written in memory of the unhappy

Keats. Of living poets his favourite undoubtedly was Tennyson. Admiring Browning, Swinburne, and Longfellow, he still found in Tennyson the highest expression of the English poetry of the nineteenth century. "The Idylls of the King," "The Princess," and, emphatically, "In Memoriam," were thoroughly mastered and freely quoted with an accuracy which astonished those who heard him. Nor did he less heartily appreciate other forms of literary power, as shown in his devotion to such writers as Ruskin and Carlyle.

In Philosophy he read deeply, and found a congenial field in comparing and contrasting the masters, ancient and modern. Though not sufficiently familiar with the language of Germany to study the works of the great thinkers in the original, he was, by means of translations, well acquainted with the theories of their several schools. He was thoroughly familiar with "Kant's Critique of Pure Reason," and with the new departure in philosophy initiated by him he evinced no small sympathy. Of the later Germans, Hegel most attracted his attention. His germ thought, which has been well named a splendid paradox, "that being and non-being are the same thing," would be frequently discussed by him when in the company of kindred spirits. Yet he never attached himself to any philosophical school. He seemed to feel that in the various systems there was more or less of truth, and while showing an inclination to the German as opposed to what is known as the Scotch School of Philosophy, he retained the position of an inquirer rather than of one who had made up his mind to take a side. All kinds of philosophical writings he eagerly devoured, from the mysticism of Jacob Bœhme to the pantheism of Spinoza. Descartes he admired, and the well-known starting point of his philosophy, *cogito ergo sum*, commended itself strongly to the mind of Mr. Douglas, though many of its developments he challenged. Among English writers, Locke had a strong hold on his esteem; the early part of his Essay on the Human Understanding was specially interesting to him. For Reid, Stewart, Brown,

but particularly Hamilton, he cherished deep respect, though, while appreciating the undoubted service which the first of these great men had rendered in vindicating the truths of common sense, and in successfully combating the sceptical subtleties of Hume, he disputed his division of first and contingent principles, and spoke of his classification as Reid had himself spoken of that of the Peripatetics, as redundant rather than deficient. Sir William Hamilton, through whom he first became acquainted with German philosophy, was carefully studied. The profound subtleties of Bishop Berkeley in the development of his theory on the non-existence of matter impressed Mr. Douglas deeply with his philosophic power; and, while dissenting from the conclusions to which many since Berkeley's day have pressed his theory, he regarded the great founder of that school as towering high in speculative faculty above his contemporaries. His admiration for Berkeley rested not only on his philosophical gifts, but also on his personal worth. The philosopher's piety and consistent Christian charity made him doubly esteemed.

In theological literature, as in philosophy, Mr. Douglas was widely read. Confining himself to no particular school, he studied all forms of theological thought, and to this fact may be attributed in great part his large and Catholic views on essentials and non-essentials of Christianity. For example, he never could see the wisdom of differing over forms of church government; and though a loyal son of the Church of Scotland, he regarded with hearty esteem the sister church on the other side of the Tweed. Indeed, many of his friends, less liberal in view than himself, would regard with feelings akin to alarm his breadth of sympathy. The many phases of Continental theology he had carefully passed in review. The flippant romancing of M. Renan, the destructive criticism of Strauss, and the *à priori* historical criticism of Baur, he examined only to reject as incompatible with Christian faith. Dorner's System of Christian Doctrine he warmly appreciated as being one of the best books in modern Christian literature, so also

Julius Müller's great work on the Doctrine of Sin.* He was, however, more conversant with British theologians. The great writers of the English Church, such as Butler, Hooker, Paley, and later, Trench and Whately, he faithfully perused. The devotional and sermon literature, in which this Church is rich, he found a pleasing and profitable field of study. The saintly Herbert, to whom, in poetic taste and refined sentiment, as well as in the shortness of his life, Douglas presented a certain resemblance, was a great favourite, and from his quaint and rich treasure house he was fond of drawing refreshment. Among sermon writers, Frederick Robertson, of Brighton, probably most influenced his thoughts, but he felt also the spell of Newman's magnetic power, and to both he was largely indebted. In an earlier part of this sketch we named Principal Caird as his favourite among living preachers, but none the less did he admire the gifts of Chalmers, Guthrie, and Candlish. He gladly embraced every opportunity of hearing the thoughtful Dr. Ker, so recently gone to his rest, and, in common with every competent critic, regarded his published sermons as among the best of their kind.

And this leads us to speak of Mr. Douglas as a preacher. For the pulpit he made careful preparation. His readiness of utterance might have tempted one less scrupulous to trust to the resources of the moment, but the sermons which form the bulk of this volume—written, it is to be remembered, without the faintest idea that they were to be published—amply prove this care. His custom was to note texts as he went through his daily course of Scripture reading, and from these he would choose his subject, often several weeks before the sermon was required. Frequently two or three themes would engage his attention about the same time, and when such was the case, a course of preliminary reading laid a basis for reflection. When the time for writing came, his facility in throwing of a discourse was

* The week before his death he had been engaged in re-reading that able work of Christian Apologetics, "Modern Doubt and Christian Belief," by Theodore Christlieb, Professor of Theology, Bonn University.

remarkable. Sometimes it was accomplished at a single sitting, and so thoroughly had he mastered both the thought and the expression that after reading it over once or twice he could repeat it almost verbatim. His taste was particularly apparent in arranging the musical part of the service, alike as regards the compositions chosen, and the music to which they were sung. He bestowed special attention on the preparation of his prayers, often writing them in full, and committing them to memory. Before going to the pulpit he usually spent some time alone. His delivery was impressive, with gentle and graceful gesture, without any attempt at display, and its effect was heightened by the serious face and the bright eye of the speaker, carrying home the conviction of his earnest purpose and great sense of responsibility. The thoughtfulness which marked his discourses, the apt illustration which came ready to his hand, and the chaste style in which his ideas were clothed, showed that their author had carefully prepared the matter and wisely chosen the manner of his message.

Into the details of the work of his parish he heartily entered. The four months of his last ministry show this. In that short time he had thoroughly organized the work of the church, and had just set the machinery in motion when he was called away. His power of influencing the younger part of his flock was remarkable, as was apparent from the Bible Class which he successfully instituted, the Young Men's Guild which he created, and the Sabbath School which flourished under his superintendence in Bella-houston. His pastoral work was a pleasure, not a task. He delighted in visiting his people, and always returned from this work gladdened by their kindly reception. A frequent source of regret, to which he gave expression among his friends, was the little, as he termed it, which he was able to do. He felt keenly on the question of the lapsed masses, and blamed the Churches for their shortcomings in regard to these. Especially he regretted the practical effect of the division of society into classes, whereby the

poor and ill-clad are virtually excluded from attending the ordinary diets of Church worship. The Church, to him, was emphatically the home of the poor, and the exclusiveness of the wealthier classes in constituting Christian congregations, from which their poorer brethren are virtually kept out, greatly grieved him. In God's house he felt there should be no difference. It was to him like "God's Acre," the equal property of all without regard to wealth or station.*

As may be gathered from what we have said, the mental powers of Mr. Douglas were of no ordinary kind. His memory was retentive. This power proved of great service to him in his class examinations, which, as is well known, depend greatly on the capacity of the student for reproducing the lectures he has heard. For grouping and forcibly presenting the points of an argument he was noted, and in the University Dialectic Society he was known as one of their readiest and best debaters. He had a striking power of digesting and assimilating knowledge. His mind was no mere storehouse in which knowledge lay deposited, but an active plastic power which transformed his acquisitions into a part of himself. His analytical power, as might be expected from one so well read in logic, was great, and to this gift might be ascribed the fresh and felicitous arrangement of his discourses. Texts, which the ordinary preacher would pass by as little suggestive, would be seized and developed with telling results. His power of argument enabled him to press his points home, and though he liked not mere polemical display, his sermons bear marks of the most careful reasoning.

His judgment was as accurate as his imagination was rich. In private life this was well shown. The faculty to

* As illustrating his keen sense of common right and privilege in God's House, an incident which occurred shortly before his death might be mentioned. One Sunday he observed, during public worship, in Bellahouston, a stranger standing without a book while the congregation was singing a hymn, and coming down from the pulpit he handed to the visitor his own. This becoming example he set on another occasion in the same church.

which we have before alluded of avoiding offence to others, and the happy distinction of having no enemies, were largely due to this gift. He could firmly stand to his principle and yet succeed in retaining the goodwill of those who differed from him. Where the diplomacy of others would fail, his discretion would carry him through. His philosophical excellence sprang from this trinity of gifts—memory, imagination, and judgment, all of which he possessed in remarkable measure. As might be expected, he showed a keen appreciation of the shades of difference in the significance of synonyms, and of words generally. Even in conversation this was indicated, where often he would go back on a sentence to substitute one expression for another that seemed to his audience to serve the purpose well enough, but which to him was lacking in exactness or point.

Of Mr. Douglas' religious character it seems superfluous to write. Yet we may be allowed to say that, however excellent in intellect, it was in this that his life shone forth most conspicuously. The simplicity of the Gospel had a charm for him which no philosophical subtlety could rival; child-like in the openness of his nature, he was a happy illustration of the Gospel condition of receiving the kingdom of heaven like a little child. Strongly would he insist on the need of not merely knowing Christ as presented to us in the written Gospels, but of having Him treasured in the heart, and of living Him in the life. To him Christianity was a thing to be translated into action rather than discussed. The loud profession ever pained him, and his daily walk and conversation made prominent the spirit, while they exhibited the form of Christian faith. He would consecrate lengthened periods to private devotion. With him it was a law, as indeed with every earnest Christian it must ever be, to spend long seasons alone with his Master. His heart was the home of charity. The love of Christ was not to be selfishly enjoyed, but was regarded as a thing too precious to be held back from others. Remarkable for the absence of a censorious spirit, his custom, when anyone was

blamed, was to suggest qualifications calculated to mitigate if not excuse, and when that might not be done he would exercise the charity of silence. He felt that, while every effort should be expended to uplift the fallen and reclaim the outcast, the endeavour should be made in a spirit conscious of our own weakness, and ever alive to the sad possibility of our failure. Hence in his sermons there is a marked absence of denunciation. He felt that the love of Christ was the magnet by which the uplifted Son of Man was to draw all men unto Him, yet he did not fail when called to declare the truth concerning the sad alternative awaiting those who wilfully reject the Gospel.

Thus have we endeavoured to trace the character of one whose memory will continue to flourish in the hearts of his friends. More might have been said, and what has been could have been said otherwise and better ; but enough, we hope, has been attempted to meet at least in some measure the wishes of the many who will cherish this volume for the sake of him who, though dead, yet speaketh.

“The path of Duty was the way to glory :
 He, that ever following her commands,
 On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
 Thro’ the long gorge to the far light, has won
 His path upward, and prevail’d,
 Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
 Are close upon the shining table-lands
 To which our God Himself is Moon and Sun.”

P O E T R Y.

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR.

Again another year has fled,
 And numbered with the silent dead
 The hours, which once we held our own ;
 All that we prized as fond and dear,
 Died with the slowly dying year—
 The year is gone !

Tolling for the dying year,
 The bells were sounding loud and clear
 Across the snow,
 Like a dirge for the departed,
 Like the songs of those who parted
 Long, long ago.

'Tis thus the thread of life runs out,
 'Tis thus the long and madd'ning route—
 The fear and pain—
 Pass like a vision or a dream,
 Float down the swiftly flowing stream
 Toward the main.

Lost in Eternity's great ocean,
 Time's grievous turmoil and commotion
 Sink down to rest ;
 Like bubbles rising in the stream,
 Like flitting fancies of a dream
 Which once the soul distressed.

PRAYER FOR LIGHT.

“Christ shall give thee light.”—*Eph. v. 14.*

From darkness and distress,
 From sorrow's thick'ning press,
 We cry to Thee !
 Lord of all lovingness,
 Pity our joylessness,
 And from our wretchedness,
 O ! set us free !

Dark is the night, and cold ;
 Far from Thy blessed fold,
 Lord, we have strayed !
 O ! do Thou, Shepherd kind,
 Temper the stormy wind,
 Guide us Thy way to find,
 Lend us Thine aid !

Dark flows each little rill,
 Gloomy the glade and hill
 When sinks the sun ;
 Darker our hearts, more chill,
 Till Thy blest light doth fill,
 Bright'ning our lives until
 Day is begun !

Sun of our souls, arise,
 Dawn on our weeping eyes,
 Glad'ning our sight ;
 Fairer than summer skies
 Blushing at sweet sunrise,
 O, Thou, all good, all wise,
 Grant us Thy light !

ON FINDING SOME INITIALS CUT IN THE
GRASS, O'ERGROWN SHORTLY AFTER-
WARDS.

Distinct upon the verdant grass
Initials fair appeared to view ;
Nor was it deemed they soon would pass,
But long to memory would be true.

But showers fell, and soft winds blew,
And sunshine sweet above them shed ;
Swiftly concealing grass up-grew—
No longer can the name be read !

But other letters—names unknown—
Are traced upon the yielding sod,
Soon in their turn to be o'ergrown,
And by the heedless foot downtrod.

It needs no preacher to unfold
This parable, or rightly scan
How truly hath the tale been told—
How hollow are the hopes of man.

We trace our name upon the heart
Of loving friend, and hope he'll keep.
However long or far we part,
The name we deem we've carved so deep.

But sorrow's rain and joy's soft light
Will overcome the letters traced ;
And other names, with new delight
Are cherished, where ours first were placed.

So, too, we hope to write our name
On History's fair storied page,
And trust to have bestowed, by fame,
An everlasting heritage.

'Tis vain ; we have not carved on stone,
 But only on the yielding grass ;
 And swiftly shall it be o'ergrown,
 Ere even a few short years can pass.

To earth our fleeting names can't cling ;
 As well, when Summer days are fled,
 Ask her from out her store to bring
 The flowers the early Spring had shed.

A BROWN STUDY IN THE DIVINITY CLASS- ROOM.

Ah, me ! what changes time will bring
 Ere twenty summers come and go,
 And hearts, that now are light as spring,
 Be heavy as the snow !

What glorious visions have we now !
 What triumphs in the future lie !
 But then we'll bear the wrinkled brow
 And sadly sobered eye.

Some few may gain the petty height
 They deem a huge Olympic hill ;
 No fairy-land will greet their sight,
 But all be tame and still.

The crowded church, the local fame,
 The learned ease, the cosy life:
 These some may reach, but all the same,
 Fruitless will seem the strife.

Yet most will miss this tinsel prize,
 And draw what seems a sorry blank ;
 No crowd to admire with upturned eyes,
 No buzz of wealth and rank.

But some poor charge, obscure and lone,
 And life—a rather humdrum thing—
 'Mid round of petty cares be thrown
 From Summer on to Spring.

Yet, could we see what then we'll be,
 What wiser would it make us now?
 It could not make our soul more free,
 Or more uncloud our brow.

Whate'er come, then, enough we know;
 For now, at least, 'tis pleasant weather;
 Then cheerily on our way let's go,
 Right cheerily together.

AN EPITAPH.

He did no deed, he sang no song of fame,
 He merely kept unstained a humble name;
 Yet, all unmarked, this rustic grave holds here
 A man, to his few friends, perchance, more dear
 Than theirs to them who raise the splendid column
 And mourn their dead with every rite most solemn.

THE SAILOR'S GRAVE.

On the landward edge of the beach, Lochranza, a sailor is buried, with
 one of the large stones of the shore to mark the spot.

Lone dweller in this seaside grave,
 It seems not all a fate unblest
 That here, beside the beating wave,
 Laid thee in Death to rest.

For thou wert of the sea, her song
 Was household music to thine ear;
 Spite of the storms you braved so long
 She moved you more with love than fear.

And now in Death thou liest here,
 Where the sea breaks the livelong day,
 And the rude stone that marks thy bier
 Is wet with salt sea spray.

A NEW YEAR.

Look on the worst that years' mischance may bring thee—
 Pain, sickness, sorrow, death of all you love;
 Call up each fear, whose spectre form doth fling thee
 To weak complaining, like the timid dove,
 Then say, all these my soul I raise above;
 I shall not stoop my head to craven fear,
 Come even what will, I only go to prove
 What men have faced before, without a tear.
 Who knows the worst is ready for it all,
 Who bravely meets his foe doth victor stand;
 Or in the contest, if he vanquished fall,
 He passes painless to the happy land,
 Where all the brave and true have entrance given
 To truer worth, and nobler life of heaven.

THE PEACE OF DEATH.

O Death, though all men dread thee,
 And shrink from thy icy hand,
 Though never a wish hath led thee,
 I sigh for thy shadowy land;
 Where the noontide is as the night is,
 Nor ever a flower blows,
 And never a song of delight is,
 But a dreamless, unbroken repose.

All pale are the cheeks of thy sleepers,
 But they turn not, and start not, or fret,
 And who of their memory are keepers,
 And who even their name doth forget,
 They ask not, they care not, they're quiet
 From love, or from hate, peace, or strife—
 The uneasy passions that riot
 In those that are prisoned in life.

Oh free blows the wind o'er the grasses,
 And fair are the flowers on the grave,
 And the sunshine and shadow still passes;
 But darkness not brightness they crave;
 For they rest from the strife and the fever,
 The care and the sorrow of breath,
 And calmness shall clasp them for ever,
 At rest in the Kingdom of Death!

A REVERIE.

O would I had the power divine
 In words so sweetly sad to flow,
 That weary souls who hopeless pine,
 My song might ease of half their woe!

O would I had the poet's skill
 To touch the secret source of tears,
 Or sing a song, wherewith to fill
 With gladness all the coming years!

'Twas thus I mused as, lorn and sad,
 I wandered up the woodland way,
 And all the neighbouring wood was glad
 With birds full-throated in the May;

And all the flowering way was spread
 With many a blossom fair and sweet,
 Though few the feet that by them tread,
 And careless all the eyes that greet.

Ah, soul, why idly thirst for fame,
 Why yearn to sing a noisy song?
 The poet's crown how few may claim,
 For life how brief! and art, how long!

But if, indeed, to thee some spark
 Of poet-feeling hath been given,
 If lay of thrush, or hymn of lark
 Can raise thee, listening, nigh to heaven;

If woods, or clouds, or wayside flower—
 The blue-eyed speedwell in the May—
 Hath o'er thy spirit such a power,
 Its gloomy thought to charm away;

Then sing thy song, and dream thy dream,
 And care not who thy verse may praise,
 And be not sad, though critics deem
 All poor and impotent thy lays.

Enough, thou know'st the world is fair,
 And nature lov'st as mother dear;
 Enough that even till whit'ning hair
 Her child thou art, her son sincere.

TO THE IMAGINATION.

Power divine! in dullest days,
 When friends are few, the few cold-hearted,
 When from out life's weary ways
 Light and song have both departed,

Ah ! how sweet with thee to wander
 In a land for ever bright ;
 Ah ! how blest with thee to ponder
 Over scenes that know not blight.

Memory brings but sad annoyance,
 Friends that failed us, love grown cold,
 Even when dawned the days of joyance,
 Ah, how soon their bliss was told !
 But with thee joys live for ever ;
 To thy lofty palace towers
 Cometh grief and treason never—
 What once we gain, is ever ours.

TO A BIRD.

(On seeing one from the window of the Hebrew Class-room.)

O bird that wing'st thy happy flight
 Through skies so blue and clear,
 Would I could share thy glad delight !
 For I am prisoned here
 Where words of weary learning flow ;
 Yet, after all, what do we know ?

Thou know'st the sky is fair at morn,
 When glows the rosy east ;
 Thou never bear'st a heart forlorn ;
 Thy happy life has ceased
 Ere care for future, thought of past
 Can o'er thy soul its shadow cast.

TO A FRIEND GOING ABROAD.

The years fly in, the years fly out,
 The varied seasons come and go,
 And days and weeks in headlong rout,
 Time's gifts or grudgings show.

My garden's sweets are freely shed,
 The hawthorn tree its blossom shows ;
 Anon, all flowering joys are sped,
 The hawthorn's white with snows.

And so, dear friend, time says we part,
 Who met some merry years ago ;
 But still we'll keep the constant heart,
 Though time may come and go.

He takes the weakest things he lent—
 The song, the jest, the jovial feast ;
 But loves, with life itself are blent,
 He cannot touch the least.

Full soon strange skies will o'er you spread,
 And ocean's length between us roll ;
 Distance makes not old memories dead,
 Nor ebbs nor flows the soul.

Farewell, and be yours peaceful days !
 Good-bye, God be thy constant guide !
 And so, whatever sport time plays,
 His worst we may abide.

“PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.”

Soldier of Christ, the armour take
 Which God himself hath given to thee ;
 Sleep not, for still thy foemen wake,
 And long the strife till victory.

Bind truth around thee ; sternly true
 Be every word, and thought, and deed ;
 Strive nobly still the right to do ;
 Pure be thy life, as pure thy creed.

Where want and woe and vice abound
 Be thine to help, to bless, to raise;
 Swift be thy feet on such work bound,
 And goodness crowd thy busy days,

Keep faith unmoved, though doubts assail,
 Trust God, and every cloud shall fly;
 Bright be thy hope, though all else fail,
 His promise God will justify.

Let God's true Word ne'er from thee go,
 But keep thy life, thy memory fill,
 That sword shall pierce with one quick blow,
 The countless hosts of baffling ill.

Watch still, and pray, nor ever tire;
 Keep lowly heart, and gentle speech;
 Christ guards thee in the hottest fire,
 No foeman's dart thy life can reach.

Brother, put on and ever wear
 God's armour for life's battle-field;
 Guarded by love and faith and prayer,
 To sin and shame thou can'st not yield.

"TO LIVE IS CHRIST."

Oh! brave and noble words! well worthy Him
 Who met unmoved the shipwreck and the storm,
 Who faced the cruel mob, the tyrant's whim,
 A hero heart within a feeble form.

"For me to live is Christ," thy watchword given,
 Proved through the stress of well-nigh thirty years,
 Through exile, sickness, wandering, torture driven,
 The world to thee a pilgrimage of tears.

And well they wore it, noble hearts and true,
 Heroes and saints of God in every land,
 Unmoved by pain or scorn, who sought to do
 The work that God entrusted to their hand !

The years have fled, they slumber in the dust,
 Their souls have passed beyond this earthly strife ;
 But their brave watchword now is given in trust
 For those who hold from God their place in life.

Oh brothers ! life's too noble to be spent
 In self and sin and pleasure's weary quest,
 Our life is God's, to Him let it be sent,
 In all fair deeds and Christ-like virtues drest ;

Our life-long motto guarding us from shame,
 Filling our souls with light, our homes with peace ;
 Let it be still, oh Christ, Thy sacred name,
 Till in our turn we too from warfare cease.

“TO DIE IS GAIN.”

As in some grand cathedral, when the sound
 Of deep-voiced organ peals in music loud,
 All lower thoughts in that sweet sea are drowned,
 Unearthly hopes upon our fancy crowd.

The world seems far away and dulling cares
 No more upon our rising spirits press,
 High as the music soars, our vision fares
 Till joy seemed almost pain in its excess.

So fall thy words in music on our ears,
 Oh saint of God ! oh hero brave and pure !
 Who through the earthward slow-revolving years,
 Long in God's Heaven hast found this promise sure.

To die, how hard ! and leave the sunny earth,
 The song of birds, the flowers, and woodland sweet,
 The child's pure face, the happy school-boy's mirth—
 Ah ! we must turn from these with heavy feet.

With heavier heart the joys of home forego,
 Look sad farewells on faces loved as life ;
 Oh who this bitterness but shuns to know,
 This awful hour with every sorrow rife.

Yet what if all this loss but seeming be,
 And it be only gain that comes in death,
 If naught pass from us but our misery,
 And stilled alone the sadly labouring breath !

If still the earth be loved, but fairer known,
 And all remembered of our mortal years,
 Only our visions purer, clearer grown,
 We see the gain in loss, the joy in tears.

If all the life-long loves be with us still,
 But purified from earthly doubt and dross.
 In truer faith and nobler wish and will,
 We'll learn, oh Death ! thy name is gain, not loss.

“THE TIME IS SHORT.”

Oh strong young soul, rising in high desire
 To mingle in the strife,
 And through the midst of battle-dust and fire
 To win the Perfect Life,
 Gird on thy sword and speed thee to the fray,
 Though many be the foe ;
 “Short is the Time” till those who watch and pray
 God's triumph-song shall know.

Mourner, whose feet the churchyard gate have passed
 Leaving thy loved dead,

At the lone days before art thou aghast
 Now love and hope are fled ?
 Hear the birds singing on the lifeless bough
 This still unsorrowing song—
 Short is the time, though all be winter now,
 God's summer comes ere long.

Bending beneath life's bitter cross of care,
 Hating the weary days,
 Oh! doubting, hopeless heart, learn this glad air,
 And turn thy plaint to praise.
 What though the way be long, the song-birds fled,
 The sky a cheerless grey,
 Short is the time till stoops the resting head
 To rise in God's bright day.

As they who watch in darkness for the day,
 As children 'mid their tears,
 So the swift hours, unknowing of delay,
 Drag heavy with our fears;
 But from God's holy place this whisper low
 Comes with its breath of peace—
 Short is the time till all your earth-born woe
 In God's sweet home shall cease.

THE VISION OF JACOB.

He passed from out his home, his father's tent;
 His mother's smile for years he should not see;
 Alone, with staff in hand he fared, till spent
 The hours of light, and faint his energy.

He sank to rest, with heaven to roof him in,
 Thick set with stars, and sleep upon him stole;
 Yet ne'er may waking eyes the glory win
 That filled with awe sublime his seeing soul.

In glorious trance he saw the rocky way
 Raised as a golden stairway high to heaven,
 And thronging bright, from where he sleeping lay,
 God's angels go and come on service given.

Lord, as we lay us down on life's hard road,
 With sorrow spent and weary with the way,
 When, friendless all, Time's ever weary load
 Has changed the morning light to evening grey;

When life is but a rocky desert bare,
 And sleep is all the comfort we can hope,
 Then do Thou send Thy glorious vision there,
 And turn to heavenly ways the mountain slope.

Open our eyes to see Thy glory shine,
 Filling with God-like grace life's common way;
 Thy angels, with their messages divine,
 Though changing, let them ever with us stay.

SONNET.

Written shortly after the death of Principal Tulloch.

"If gold doth rust, what, then, should iron do?"
 So spake our earliest singer long ago
 In that great song, where for all time he drew
 This noble priest who Christ's own life did show.
 And sore we need his words; for, to our woe
 And lasting shame, even in these later days
 God's Church is all with party strife aglow,
 Faction's fierce tongue brawling in all her ways.
 The scholar's calm, the catholic temper sweet,
 The loving eyes that see the good in all,
 How seldom in the temple's court we greet:
 Sooner we'd find them where the traders brawl.
 And now our later Leighton's head is low—
 Tulloch, with thee what wide, wise thought did go!

SONNET.

OUR MEMORIAL.

“Wherever this gospel may be preached in the whole world, there also shall this be told, for a memorial.”—*Matt. xxvi. 13.*

“They dream’t not of a perishable home
 Who could thus build.” So spake our poet wise,*
 As overhead and far as eye could roam
 He saw the splendid arch and column rise
 Of some cathedral, which dead ages reared.
 But we, alas, shall never leave behind
 Such fair memorial of our faith revered,
 By no such deathless work be borne in mind!
 O dull of soul, even to the least is given
 The power to build what Time can ne’er destroy;
 Not churches raising high their spires to heaven,
 But deeds of kindness, gifts of purest joy;
 And these through all the years unmoved shall stand—
 A great rock’s shadow in a weary land.

* Wordsworth.

THE CATHEDRAL.

“If these should hold their peace, the stones would cry out.”

Spake the porch—With arms extended
 Call I all to enter in,
 For God’s house is wide and spacious,
 And, than years in haunts of sin,
 Sweeter far an hour, when ended,
 Spent its holy gates within.

Spake the nave—With lofty arches
 Upward thus I’ve nobly striven ;

So in life, as on it marches,
 To the soul is oft'time given,
 Through a gateway small and lowly,
 Entrance into highest heaven.

Spake the windows—Saint and martyr,
 Prophet, angel, here we stand,
 Deem not, then, ye wander lonely,
 Evermore a shining band
 Watch you, and will leave you only
 When you clasp the Master's hand.

Spake the spire—With cross uplifted
 Here I stand from day to day,
 Clouds and darkness round me drifted,
 Hang awhile, then pass away.
 So, brave soul, thy cross upbearing,
 Soon will dawn thy crowning day!

“REJOICE!”

Philippians iv. 4.

“While there is light in the air and birds are singing I shall walk forth this earth with a glad and joyous heart!”—(*From the last speech of the late Rev. Dr. Norman Macleod.*)

Still in mine ear these noble words are ringing,
 Soothing my soul with more than music's art—
 While light is in the air and birds are singing
 I'll walk this earth with glad and joyous heart.

What though awhile in darkness we may wander
 Where crowded cities shut out God's fair sky,
 Still, we in thought see fields of light out yonder
 Where oft' the lark his carol sings on high.

What though awhile our path seem sad and lonely,
 And sorrow's cup be filled e'en to the brim !
 Hope on, faint heart ! His way is goodness only !
 Is not thy pathway all alight with Him ?

Why would'st thou weave life's web of sombre colour ?
 Why would'st thou still to mourning tune thy voice ?
 See ! oft a bright thread lights that pattern duller !
 List ! all creation calls thee to rejoice !

God's way is light ! God's will is holy gladness !
 Clouds are earth-born, they cling not to His heaven ;
 Rise o'er thy grief, repining is but madness !
 Take thou the joy that to thy heart is given !

SERMONS.



I.

CHILDREN OF LIGHT.

“WALK AS CHILDREN OF LIGHT.”—*Ephesians v. 8.*

THE possession of a certain character is always a call to duty. It is this which is perhaps the sole advantage in the inheritance of a noble name and in belonging to an ancient family, that where there is any moral susceptibility at all it lends an additional stimulus to noble conduct, and may lead a man to shrink from vices as not only degrading to himself, but as dishonouring the memory of illustrious ancestors. It is the same influence which the affection of patriotism ought to have upon us. Where there is a deep love of country, and a knowledge of the heroic events and struggles of the past, a man feels that he possesses a larger life than his own, and realizes that any deed of dishonour not only disgraces himself, but casts a blot on the fair fame of his native land.

Again, there are certain professions which, in virtue of belonging to them, make an appeal to men to uphold a certain character. And here the appeal is even stronger than in the former case. For when a man acts in a manner unworthy the name he bears, or the country to which he belongs, we feel, indeed, that he has dishonoured more than himself; but still, as he could not choose to what family he should belong, or what country he should call fatherland, we regard it as a lesser degree of guilt, as a case in which a man has failed to rise to the call made upon him by

others, not one in which he has been deliberately false to a vow made by himself. And so we regard it as a far deeper crime when a man has been untrue to the standard of a calling he has voluntarily adopted. When we find a soldier displaying cowardice, when we find a judge accepting bribes, when we find a teacher fostering ignorance, or a clergyman encouraging impiety, we not only revolt as at things in themselves evil, but we have a kind of moral horror that men should fail in that which it was the deliberate choice of their life to uphold.

Or again, when men have been admitted to the intimate companionship of a master-mind, advanced to the closest intimacy, sharing his daily thoughts, we look that the character of the master should be repeated in the disciple, and that, if he cannot equal his master's genius, he should at least follow it, and that when death causes his teacher and friend to let fall the pencil or pen, if he cannot wield them with a like power, he must never turn them into hostile weapons, to sully his master's fame and spoil his master's work. But when it has been otherwise, when the chosen disciple not only sets himself in antagonism to his master, but to his master's life-work, and tries to undo and cast down all that his master has sought through laborious years to upbuild, we feel that we have reached the deepest moral degradation—for it is not the mere life of his master he is assailing, but that which is the very life of his life—and he is untrue, not, as in the former cases, to a relationship he did not himself choose, nor to the general and abstract traditions of a profession, but to a personal example and love, of which, for years, he had been the chosen and favoured recipient.

Now, my brethren, in all these cases I have supposed a certain duty follows in the possession of a certain character; that is, the mere relationship gives rise to the duty, and is, in itself, an inspiring call to it. And such a relationship the text assures us we bear, and the appeal it makes to us is based on the possession of such a character. We are to let our light shine before men that they may see our

good works, and so glorify our Father in Heaven. This character involves all the three relationships which I have used as illustrations.

In the first place, my brethren, we are "children of light" in virtue of our Christian birth and training. As men by birth are made members of a noble family, or natives of a famous country, we were all born into the Christian Church. In our unconscious infancy we were signed and sealed as Christ's in our baptism, and around our earliest years were shed the blessed influences of a Christian home. The great truths of Christianity were ours as soon as our dawning reason could grasp them. With our maturer years we learned these doctrines for ourselves, but we can no more go back to a time when they were not in some measure our own, than we can recall a time when we first consciously learned to love our parents.

Everyone who has received a Christian training is, in this sense, a "child of light." If he lead a sinful life, he cannot do so lightly—for he must sin against light; and just as the stronger the light is, the deeper is the shadow which it throws, so the clearer the light of Christian teaching has been, our sin is the blacker.

But we are "children of light" in virtue, also, of our voluntary profession. We are not merely Christians by our birth, we are so by personal choice. We are members of the church no longer by parental constraint, but of our own will—for we have deliberately renewed our Christian vows again and again at the Sacrament.

This, my brethren, as it implies a deeper profession, implies a heavier responsibility and a more urgent call. They are greatly to blame, indeed, who refrain from coming to the communion service of Christ, from the idea that it saves them from a deeper vow, and so gives them a larger license to sin. For they are wrong altogether in their idea that they thereby escape being members of the church. They were made such in their baptism, when, by the hands of their parents, and in the presence of the Church of God, they were dedicated to a life-long service of Christ. I do

not say how cowardly it is to refuse to renew that vow, and that it is already giving the battle to the enemy thus to secure the retreat beforehand. But, in place of incurring less guilt, they are deliberately heaping on themselves more, for they are consciously disobeying a command of God, and neglecting what Christ has given as an especial means of grace, not from any modesty or humility of self-distrust, but in order that they may have, as they fancy, a greater freedom to gratify their evil lusts.

But while they lessen no responsibility who wilfully and wantonly abstain from renewing their Christian vows, yet it is none the less true that those who thus renew them are taking upon them a deeper profession. They are voluntarily adopting as their own the Christian character and aim; and if their lives are not accordant with that, we must pass on them the same condemnation as we award to a soldier who is a coward, or to a judge who is unjust.

But we are—at least I should fain hope we all are—“children of light,” not only as regards outward privilege and profession, but in the sense that we have shared in personal communion with Him who is the “Light of the World.” At least at times in our life surely there has come to all of us that reviving breath of the Spirit of God when Christ has been to us, not one whom we see in the distant past through the mist of the centuries, or away in the far-off heavens where our faith can scarcely carry us, but He has been so real to us that all earthly things have been dim beside Him, and we have lived and talked with Him as truly as the disciples did on the Galilean shore, or in the home at Bethany.

Now the Communion with Christ, as it admits us to a higher privilege, entails on us a heavier responsibility. Who is the man on whom the whole Christian world looks with the utmost loathing? It is neither Caiaphas who plotted the death of Christ, nor Pilate who authorized it, nor the soldiers who accomplished it, though legally, theirs was the greatest guilt; but it is Judas, who, admitted to the closest communion with his Master, chosen as

one of his constant companions, receiving His daily solicitude and love, could prove deaf to every call to loyalty and devotion, and wantonly betray Him.

We, too, have often shared Christ's Communion, as you, my brethren, have so lately done; but the unwatchful disciple may still go from receiving the bread and wine from the very hand of Christ, only again to betray Him to His enemies, who may crucify his Lord afresh. May God avert from us all this shameful guilt, that we may never know the burning remorse of the betrayer of Christ, nor share his lasting infamy!

But now, my brethren, suppose, to revert to our former illustration, a man is in danger of acting a part unworthy the character and position he bears, is not one of the best ways of recalling him to his duty simply that of reminding him of all that is involved in his character? It is so that on many a battle-field, the mere name of the family or country to which the soldiers belonged has been the most inspiring of all war-cries, because it came to them laden with the memories of the past, and reminding them of the bravery they must show, if they would be worthy the name they bore. And so, my brethren, if we seek to grasp all that is involved in the character and title we bear of "children of light," it may help us to rise to a higher life, and to "let our light shine before men, that they may glorify our Father in Heaven."

First, then, as "children of light," we must let our light shine before men by being hopeful and cheerful. Light seems to have an instinctive effect in raising men to more happy and hopeful thoughts, and many can trace an alternation of their spirits, according as the day is dark or bright.

Were it possible for us to exist in a world where there was no light—in such an one as Milton has described in his famous poem—even if everything else were to remain the same, all the joy and hope would be crushed out of existence. A writer of the present day tells us that he once allowed himself to be shut up in a dark cell, in order

to try what the effect of it was upon prisoners, and though he knew he was only to be in it for a very brief time, and had no sense of crime to oppress him, yet it plunged him at once into the most dreadful despair, and he never was so glad as when his self-imposed task was ended, and he once more beheld the light. Now, my brethren, we are "children of light," because Christianity has taken away all possible darkness from life by the assurance it brings us of God's unfailing love and Christ's protecting care. It has assured us that everything happens to us under God's Providence, and that that Providence can never send us anything really evil. Trouble may come upon us, but it is but a passing and temporary discipline which will issue in a higher good. Death itself is no evil, since it cannot touch our true life, nor really separate us from those we love. Not only we ourselves, but the whole world is the object of God's love, and all things are moving on to the end when God shall be all in all.

Now, my brethren, if this is the light which Christ sheds on us—and I have said nothing which all Christians do not acknowledge—we ought never to be otherwise than full of cheerfulness and hope. I know it is only too common to speak of religion as inducing gloom, and I will not deny that there is a kind of religion which may plunge a man into morbid melancholy, if it does not consign him to the madman's cell. But I would no more allow such fanaticism to be Christianity than I would allow the flaring light of a furnace to be the life-giving light of the sun. The former is like the beacon-fire on a hill, dispelling the darkness only with an uncertain and flickering light, and filling men's hearts with fear; but Christianity is like the morning sun, that without noise or bustle dispels every shadow of darkness, and awakens man to the cheerful task of his morning's labour. I repeat, then, my brethren, that we are to let our light shine before men, by walking in cheerfulness and hope.

But again, if we are to let our light shine before men, we must walk in purity. Even material light seems in some

strange way to have a power for goodness in the world, so that men shrink from doing in the blaze of day, what they feel no remorse to perform in the dark of night. Darkness and night are the congenial time (I had almost said the necessary condition) of evil deeds. The daylight is the time for honest work, or for peaceful thought in the sunlit fields; but night and darkness summon the aliens of society to their work of crime, and rouse the evil passions to revel and debauchery.

But, my brethren, as it is said of Heaven, that "there is no night there," so the light of the Christian life on earth never sets. As "children of light" no hours of darkness must come to rouse the evil passions of our souls. We may be surprised into momentary sins—and every day, as it closes, we should feel that we have failed and come short; but we shame our character, if evil ever becomes a habit of our soul. My brethren, let us examine ourselves, and see how far we are true to the character we bear. As every day you throw open the windows, that the health-giving sunlight may flood every corner of your house, so we are not true "children of light," unless we seek to let the truth of Christ shine into every corner of our soul.

I think it was related of some one who was accused of plotting treason, that he built his house of glass as a challenge to his accusers, and as a token that he had nothing to conceal. And as "children of light," we must make our life transparently good. We must have no darkened chambers in our house, no secret sins in our souls. A light that is placed in a lantern, the glass of which is so dimmed and dusty that it can scarcely transmit the rays, is of no use to anyone; we can say, "the light is there," but we cannot say "it gives light." And a Christian who cherishes any sinful habit, is such a useless light; for one evil habit will make quite ineffectual the goodness of an entire life. As "children of light," then, we must seek to walk in purity.

But, again, we can only be faithful to this character by "walking in truth." "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth;" so writes the "beloved

disciple " in one of his latest epistles, and so we believe our Lord Himself would have spoken.

When the Persians were at the height of their glory, it was said that they owed their greatness to the education they gave their youths, and that consisted of three things "to ride on horseback, to shoot with the bow, and to speak the truth." I know not whether it may be still so, but this was long the boast of our own nation, and of one of our great heroes it has been sung—

“ He never sold the truth to serve the hour,
Nor paltered with Eternal God for power.”
“ Truth-teller was our England’s Alfred named ;
Truth-lover was our English Duke.
Whatever record leap to light.
He never shall be shamed.”

When one is walking in darkness he can see nothing of anything around him ; when one is walking in mist he can, indeed, see, but everything looks different from what it really is ; but full and clear sunlight shows us the exact position and character of all around us. And as “children of light” we must neither be like the darkness which hides nor like the mist which distorts, but like the sun which reveals things as they are.

But this duty of truth refers to more than the mere words we utter ; for it may be said that no one can tell the truth who does not also live it. Nay, I think you will find, my brethren, that any vicious habit, any falsehood that is in our action or life, will sooner or later force a man to falsehood in speech.

But to “let our light shine before men,” we must not only speak the truth and try to live it, but we must delight in all truth and seek after it, for truth is our light.

It is strange how birds and flowers not only need the light, but seek after it, and delight in it. If you put a flower in a dark cellar, where the light comes feebly through a chink in one side of the wall, you will find that the flower begins to grow towards that spot, and will twist

and distort itself to reach it. And so, I am told, in winter time you will see the birds gathered at sunrise on the eastern side of the hill, that they may sooner hail the dawn. And if we are true "children of light," like the birds and the flowers, we shall strive after all truth and all knowledge. Above all, we shall seek to know ourselves as we really are—our faults and our failings; and we shall delight in all we can learn about God, and about the world He has made.

But again, to "let our light shine before men," we must do good to others, and that without ostentation. Life on earth depends on many different conditions, but there are two especial requisites—light and air. Take either of these away, and all life would die. But light is, above all, the most important. Without it, all growth would cease, no breezes would blow, no water would run. Yet though it does most good, it is the quietest thing in the world. The air murmurs even in the gentlest breeze, the water may be heard flowing even in the stillest river; but sunlight, though scientific men tell us it, too, flows in waves, makes not the smallest sound. A spect of dust causes intense pain to the eye, yet millions of particles of light can touch it without the least discomfort. And when we think of the immense rapidity of light, for it travels some millions of miles in a second, its absolute quietness strikes us with amazement. Now we must imitate the light in not only doing good to others, but in doing it quietly, it is Christ's own law, "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." The "children of light" must be unostentatiously kind and good.

I shall only refer to one other characteristic of light, which must be repeated in the children of it: it is its universally beautifying influence. You all know that the beauty of the world around us not only is revealed by the light, but is actually created by it. The bright and beautiful colour of any object, is simply owing to the quality of light it absorbs; and what we call the colour of the object, is simply the light it retains. But the highest kind of beauty we know—the beauty of a landscape, is simply the creation of light. The gleaming of the waters, the shadows

on the hills, the tints of the clouds, which unite to form a glorious picture to the eye, these are simply due to the light; and the poet is as scientifically as he is poetically true, when, in his hymn to Light, he says:—

“Thy nimble pencil paints the landscape as thou goest.”

But not only does light make lovely, things which in themselves are really so, but, as a great writer has said, there is no object so foul that intense light will not make beautiful. On a day of brilliant sunshine, you may see the muddy pools on the roadway gleaming in gold, and the full moon can throw a halo of softened splendour on the most commonplace scene.

Now, as “children of light,” we must spread around us moral beauty; we must bring out the good that is in others, not the evil. It is strange, the different estimate of the people around them that two persons will form. One will find hardly anything but good, another will find hardly anything but evil. And we say, “Oh, it is because the one is too slack in his estimate, and the other is too severe.” But has it never struck you that the explanation may be quite different, and that both may be quite correct in their estimate; but the one has had the power of evoking only the evil, and the other only the good, that is in others?

However that may be, we, my brethren, must bring out all around us moral beauty and loveliness. We shall not fail to do so if we simply exercise the silent power for goodness which belongs to every “child of light.” Hope and expect the best things from others, and you will bring out the best; and do not speak so much words of fault-finding, but let the silent influence of your life be the best rebuke to evil. And let this influence for goodness, this true love to others, flow out to all, just as the sun shines as gladly on the dusty city-lane as on the sweet hillside, and enters as brightly the lonely garret as he does the palace garden.

And, as a great writer has said, that the true test of a cultivated man, is that you could not exchange words with him when taking refuge from a shower together, without

seeing that he *is* a man of culture, so, my brethren, we are not true to our character of "children of light" unless even the most casual acquaintance feels that we are "walking in light."

In aiming after all the qualities I have spoken of, after Cheerfulness, Purity, Truth, Quiet Goodness, and Elevating Influence on others, we are only, my brethren, striving after some of the virtues which belonged to our Redeemer in such perfection that He was and ever will remain the Light of the World. Were we to strive after even one of these virtues, alone and unaided, the task might seem hopeless; but we are "children of light" simply because Christ has already kindled His light in our souls, and He who has lit the light can alone keep it burning. And so we are "children of light" only as we walk every day in fellowship with Him who is the Light.

Last Sunday, my brethren, you celebrated, in outward and visible form, this Communion with Christ; and as the poet tells us how at the feast which his great ideal, King Arthur, made to his Knights,

"He beheld
From eye to eye thro' all this order flash
A momentary likeness of their King,"

so may it have been at your Sacrament, for surely none could partake of that most impressive of all services without being stirred with a longing after an earnest Christian life. But the likeness to your King must not be a mere "momentary" one, which dies away when you pass from Communion Table or Church, to mingle in the world's strife. Nay, just as light shows most intense amid surrounding gloom, it must be amid the world's sins and sorrows, amid the daily strife and conflict of evil that you must prove—if you prove at all—that you are "children of light," "burning and shining lamps," reflecting the glory of Him who is the only true and lasting Light of man.

II

THE ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS OF
CHRIST.

“AND I, IF I BE LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH, WILL DRAW ALL MEN UNTO ME.”—*John xii. 32.*

THESE words, we are expressly told by the Apostle, were spoken by Christ, with reference not only to His death, but to the special mode of it; “This He said, signifying what death He should die,” and they are, therefore, peculiarly appropriate for our consideration on the evening of the day in which you have again partaken of that Solemn Sacrament which commemorates our Lord’s death and dying love.

How early our Lord foresaw the cruel and shameful death He was to die we do not know, for this is one of those points in which it is difficult, if not impossible, for us to adjust the relations of His manhood and His divinity, or to see how, without ceasing to be a true man, He could yet partake in the superhuman insight of God.

And so, all through the crowded work of His three eventful years, we may believe that Jesus was looking forward to that decease He was to accomplish at Jerusalem; that the popularity which at first attended Him—“the bright Galilean spring,” as it has been called—the thronging crowds and the murmured praises, could not make him forget the needful, yet painful, death; that when the disciples were dreaming of thrones and honours, He knew that His only elevation should be to a cross, His only honours those offered in disdainful mockery by a ribald soldiery and a jeering crowd.

But when Christ spoke the words of our text, the long-anticipated passion was close upon Him, for they were uttered, probably, on Palm Sunday, the last Sunday He was ever, as a man, to spend here on earth.

Some Greeks had come desiring to see Jesus, and were brought by two of His disciples to their Master; and the thoughts of Jesus ran at once on that subject which, for both His own and His disciples' sakes, was at this time the deepest thing on his mind. Instead of taking any direct notice of the strangers, or speaking about them to the disciples, He sought to convince them of the necessity of His death by drawing, as He so often did, an illustration from nature—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

These words have, no doubt, a closer connection with the visit of the Greeks than at first sight appears. There were many Greeks dwelling in the land of Palestine, but as far as we know Christ does not seem to have come into contact with them. He confined Himself, as He directed His disciples to do at first, to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." It was not that He did not care for the great Gentile world, but that He could only save them by first seeking the Jews.

And now, when two of these Gentiles came in this solemn hour of His fate and sought to see Him, when, moved by something they may have heard about Him from the crowd, or, roused by some words they had caught from His own lips, they asked with reverent curiosity one of His disciples to lead them to his Master, then there seems to have rushed across the soul of Jesus a flood of various emotions. He saw in these few Greeks the first fruits of the Gentiles. They were members and representatives of a race which, in some respects, far outrivalled his own; a race gifted with the love of the beautiful, and the capacity for knowledge, and the search for truth; and here He was standing who alone could gratify these desires, who could fulfil the dreams of their poets about a Son of Man who should be also a Son of God; who was the ideal good and suffering One of whom their greatest philosophers wrote. If He could just go to these lands and isles of Greece, of which he could almost see the faint, far-off traces from the shores of His native

land, He would there be free from the prejudices that so hindered His work in Palestine, and become at once what the prophet voice spoke over Him in His infancy, when, by the aged Simeon, it called Him "a light to lighten the Gentiles." Nay, it is not irreverent to suppose, with more than one commentator, that over the soul of Jesus, which was human in all innocent susceptibilities and longings, there may have rushed the wish that His life might be prolonged, so that He could go to these darkened lands, which were waiting so eagerly for the light; so that He could stand in the streets of Athens as He had done in those of Jerusalem, and proclaim Himself as the Light and Life of Men.

But no, it was not to be, that glorious work was not for Him, it was to be given to one who was even now a young zealot and disciple of His bitter foes; for Him, that very week should bring but the hours of agony, and the death of shame. For we cannot believe it was any physical fear of death, which so many of the saintly, and some of the bad, have met with calm brow and undaunted heart, that so moved the soul of Christ that He spoke even aloud among the crowd, "Now is my soul troubled;" and shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour."

No, it was no fear nor foreboding of any pain or torture which could so move the soul of Christ; but it was that He whose heart was throbbing with love to the whole world, should for hours be abandoned by every friend, and see nothing but hatred round him, hatred so deadly that it could gloat upon His torture and death; it was that He, the infinitely gentle and pure, should see, raging for hours round Him, the worst passions of the worst hearts; it was that He, who clung to life, not because it had pleasure or ease to offer Him, but because He could do so much for God and man, shrank with natural human feeling from the approach of death, as if it were putting a period to all His missions. But this feeling was but momentary—a passing cloud in the brightness of the sky. For Christ saw, and

taught His disciples to see, that His very death was the means of hastening and perfecting His work; that it could not stop it, but only accelerate it; that just as a seed unburied in the ground contains its life within itself, and abides alone, but, buried in the cold dark earth, it multiplies itself; so His descent into Death's darkness, should not quench, but increase His power to lighten the world. For as the seed spreads itself into all the fruit it bears, so that instead of one seed you have a hundred, so Christ by His Spirit would spread Himself in every disciple, and instead of one Christ there would be thousands; instead of only the little country of Palestine, every corner of the earth should see the Salvation of God. Nay, even the cruel and shameful death which awaited Him, and in which His enemies thought they should not only wreak their vengeance on Him, but make Him a scorn and derision for ever,—yes, even that death should be a triumph, that Cross should become a throne, that hated and despised symbol should become the most honoured and sacred sign in the world, and to that Cross the eyes of men, in ever increasing crowds, through all the coming centuries, should be turned in deepest awe and worship,—“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”

The Cross of Christ is the centre of attraction to the world; His whole life and work should move us; but what teaches us especially is “Christ crucified;” it is not merely Christ, but Christ uplifted on the Cross, which draws all men.

This is so, because, in the first place, we see in the crucifixion of Christ the most awful suffering borne by the holiest and gentlest with the utmost patience. There is something in suffering which moves and draws the human heart as nothing else can. The suffering even of the lower animals moves and touches us, leads us to sympathise with them as we never do at other times. Even our enemies, whom we only too readily hate as long as they are prosperous, we find we no longer so regard when they are brought low. If no other feeling checks us, the sense of fairness and manliness then restrains our tongue. To hate

them now would seem like striking one who cannot protect himself. It is the same feeling which prompts the well-known and generally respected advice, "Concerning the dead, speak nothing but good;" the suffering they have passed through would make our rude attack a profanity.

Now, if this is so with those to whom we are utterly indifferent, or even hostile, how must suffering enhance the influence over us of those whom we respect and love. Let anyone think of the great characters of real or fictitious history; however much you admire them, it is not till they have suffered that your heart is drawn to them. Columbus in chains, Joan of Arc at the stake, Livingstone dying in the African jungle, Cranmer amid the flames, these move us as the other parts of their lives, however great, cannot do. Nay, let anyone look back to his own domestic history. When did you most respect and love your departed friends? Not, surely, in the hours of their gaiety and pleasure. No, but it was when God had laid upon them the heavy burden of illness—when the soul of the sick one was alone with God in that sacred presence-chamber of affliction—then it was that you reproached yourself for any former neglect of duty and affection, and felt a certain awe as in the presence of one upon whom God had laid His sacred baptism of suffering.

But when the suffering descends on one whom we not only respect and love, but when it comes all undeserved—when the martyr is slain by those whom he had given his life to bless, when the missionary (like the young and saintly Bishop Pattison a few years ago) is shot to death by the arrows of those whom he lived only to benefit and save—then the influence of the suffering one upon us is still greater; we not only love, but we reverence him. Now, it is true that Christ suffered all through His life. It is not in His death upon the cross, but in one of His great days of healing and teaching that the evangelist St. Matthew sees fulfilled the words, "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

But in His crucifixion, there was concentrated the most

awful suffering of body and of soul. I need not recount these details, for surely they ought to be in every Christian memory. But think of His agony in the garden—his betrayal by one of His own chosen disciples—the flight of all the twelve—the thrice-repeated denial of His best and most devoted follower—think of the six times repeated trial—how He was hurried from hall to hall, from Annas to the Sanhedrim, from the Sanhedrim to Pilate, from Pilate to Herod, from Herod back to Pilate again—how He saw none but callous hearts around him, determined on His guilt; heard nothing but the testimony of false witnesses, and the jeers of cruel foes—think of the shame and insults, the buffeting, the scourging, the mocking, now by Jewish servants, now by Roman soldiers—think of the platted thorns, the seething crowd of enemies, and their cruel yell, “crucify, crucify!”

Then follow to the last scene of all—see the torture of the crucifixion on a body already so worn and pained—think of the pierced feet and hands, the throbbing brow, the whole frame tingling with pain, and then, think how the sense of all his His love rejected, all His kindness forgotten, all the sin which raged around, so pressed and saddened His heart, that with one piercing cry He yielded His life, and thus actually died, not of His cruel wounds, but literally of a broken heart, a heart broken by the world’s sorrow and sin, and shall we not say, was there ever sorrow like unto His sorrow, was there ever suffering like unto that of Christ? And when we think how patiently it was borne—how no complaint fell from Him—how when reviled, He reviled not again—how in the midst of all He could give forgiveness to one disciple and comfort to another—could give hope and salvation to a dying sinner—home to a sorrowing mother, and prayer and forgiveness to His murderers; when we remember that He who was so cruelly used was not only holy and good, but the holiest and best, that His life was one long benediction, unstained by a single sin, can we wonder that the Cross of Christ is the greatest magnet in the world, that it is drawing to itself, with resist-

less power, the hearts and lives of men, and that the words of Jesus are ever more and more fulfilled, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

But, secondly, the Cross of Christ draws the world, because in it we have the greatest proof of the love of God.

I have spoken of the death of Christ as the death of the holiest and the best, and we must never forget that Christ suffered not only with a true human body, but also with a true human soul. But the pale Sufferer who hung upon the Cross, was more than man, He was God under the limitations of man, entering into human life, tasting its deepest needs, and meeting its cruellest death.

There is mystery here, my brethren, but we must not therefore disbelieve it, for we live and walk in a world of mysteries, and not even the wisest man can tell the mysteries of his own being, or even how the meanest flower grows. As our greatest living poet sings,—

" Flower in a crannied wall,
I pluck thee out of thy crannies;
I hold thee in my hand,
Root and flower and all in all;
Little flower, if I could understand
What thou art all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

We cannot understand how Christ upon the Cross should be at once suffering man and saving God; but that it is so our own heart affirms, for this satisfies its needs as nothing else can. Only think then, my brethren, that God suffered for us a humiliation so deep, a sacrifice so great that hardly would friend have endured it for friend, or mother for child; and then can we ever doubt the love of God, even when He lays upon us suffering and sorrow? Rather will not we say with the great Apostle, "who can separate us from the love of Christ?" "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, . . . nor things present, nor things to come

. . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Yes, the Cross of Christ draws the world, because it is the crowning proof of God's love.

But lastly, and in a word, the Crucifixion of Christ draws the world because in it we see at once the horror of sin, and the hope of conquering it. When, my brethren, do we learn the awfulness of sin? Not when we see some old and hardened sinner sinking under it, but when we see some young and beautiful child, with face that has not yet lost the sweetness of heaven, surrounded by all the dark vice and crime of some foul city lane.

And so we must look at the Cross of Christ, if we would see what sin is. Once there came to this earth of ours a heart that was perfectly stainless, a soul that, not for one brief hour of morning, but all through its day of life, reflected the clear sky of heaven. This life breathed nothing but blessing, spoke nothing but truth, felt nothing but love. How did men receive it? Did they worship it, reverence it, admire it? Did they at the worst neglect it? Alas! my brethren, they scourged it, they mocked it, they nailed it to the Cross.

But you say it was the Jews did that. No, my brethren, it was sin did it—your sin and mine. The Jews were only, so to speak, the representatives of the world. This sin of the world is one huge ocean of guilt and shame, rolling on from one generation to another, from which we all receive and to which we all give. It rose against Christ and sought to overwhelm Him; and though only one part of the world's guilt assailed Him, that part represented all. For every sin and evil of men's lives was there, assisting in crucifying Jesus. Ingratitude and avarice were there in Judas, cowardice and time-serving in Pilate, calumny and slander in the false witnesses, idleness and cruelty in the Roman soldiers, every dark vice and passion in the crowd which yelled "crucify!" and which surged around His Cross.

I am, then, stating no theological dogma, but a deep religious truth, felt ever most deeply by the saintliest souls

that your sins and mine, in common with the whole world's sin, nailed Christ to the Cross. And would we know what sin really is—would we learn a deep horror of it—let us simply look on that agonised and pale sufferer, and think, had there been no self-indulgence and idleness, no lying and wrong, that would never have been; and in so far as I have shared these, my sin had part in the world's crowning guilt.

But side by side with that horror of sin the Cross of Christ gives us a hope of victory over it. By that death of His He taught us not to sink in hopeless despair over the sins of the past. God's love could accept the devotion of the future as cancelling the past; Christ's example and spirit could make, even of a crucified robber, a dying saint.

I have spoken of the Crucifixion of Christ as drawing the world, because it shows the sufferings of the holiest and the best, the infinite love of God, the horror of sin, and the hope of victory; and I might go on to show how Christ crucified has drawn, and is drawing, the love of millions; how—to quote the words, not of a preacher nor a theologian, but of the most famous soldier of modern days, the great Napoleon—"Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of their genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him. Here is a conqueror who draws men to Himself for their highest good, who unites to Himself, incorporates into Himself, not a nation, but the whole human race."

Yes; Christ is drawing the world. He is drawing all of us by the attractive power of His Cross, but it is possible for us to resist that power. Other forces are drawing us too; the love of sin and the love of self—all our lower and baser nature urges us away from Christ. Which power shall we follow? in which direction shall we be drawn?

Remember, my brethren, they who are not with Christ are against Him; if we will not be drawn to Him, we must be drawn to His enemies, and our whole life shall not only be one act of basest ingratitude to the Divinest love, but

in the words of the great Apostle, we, in a moral sense, shall be renewing the world's crowning crime, for we will be "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame."

Will we not rather, my brethren, pray the prayer of the Psalmist—"Draw us, O Christ, and we will run after Thee. We will run the way of Thy Commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge our hearts."

III.

CHRIST THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE.

"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE."—*John xi. 25.*

EVERY one knows and can appreciate the difference between what we call an abstract truth and a fact, between an opinion and a matter of firmest personal certainty, between a belief which we have gathered from various quarters, but which has nowhere any living centre, and that which is so embodied in some one whom we have known and loved that it is sacred and real to us as his very person. And when we enquire in which of these two ways the truth of immortality has been given to us, how it is that we can answer that persistent question, "If a man die, shall he live again?"—what grounds we have for confident hope that those dear ones who go from us are not lost to us, but only gone before us to the Blessed Life—the words of our text come to tell us that it is in the latter and not in the former way, it is as a most sure fact, as a firmest personal certainty, and as the very heart of the most sacred and real of all lives, that we can hold the truth of the existence beyond death—"I *am*," so speaks our Lord, "the Resurrection and the Life."

Perhaps to many of us these words of Christ have only appeared as another way simply of stating what we would express by saying, "I declare to you the truth of the Resurrection and Immortal Life," and it may have appeared to us only a biblical and oriental mode of expression, that Jesus should, by His language, seem to claim to be part of His own person. All He means, we are apt to imagine, by saying "I *am* the Resurrection and the Life," is perhaps simply to draw attention to His testimony in favour of them. Now this idea of our text is utterly wrong. It misses its whole force and point, for you may see by the least careful reading, that what Jesus wished to convey was not a simple

belief in the resurrection, which Martha already possessed, and had given expression to, but that He Himself was, as it were, its embodiment and guarantee. Hence, when Martha says, "I know my brother shall rise again in the resurrection," her words do not content Jesus, but He immediately seeks to correct them by lifting her up to a higher and surer faith, centering in Himself, and so emphatically says, "It is *I* that am" (for that is the full force of the original words) "the Resurrection and the Life."

Before I try to unfold to you the meaning of this declaration of our Lord, let me endeavour to make clear to you the great advantages which belong to what I may call this personal embodiment of truth.

Have you not noticed how all truths require to be associated with some person before they impress us much? Take, for instance, the most familiar facts of history or geography—say the life of Queen Elizabeth or Napoleon, the battle of Trafalgar, or the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the natural features of India or China—now is it not the case that you may read about all these in books, or may hear about them in a casual way, without their making much impression upon you? But suppose something arises which brings you, as it were, into personal contact with any of these—if, for example, you read in the British Museum some letter which Elizabeth wrote in one of the great crises of her life; or if, in our own Scottish Museum, you actually look upon one of the medals struck at the time to commemorate the slaughter of St. Bartholomew; if, in the course of a voyage, you land at that small rocky island where Napoleon was imprisoned after Waterloo; or if you were to see in Portsmouth the old flagship of Nelson, and the very spot marked out where the hero fell with his mortal wound; if, finally, some dear friend were to return after years of absence in a foreign country, and were to describe to you his travels and adventures there—in all these instances do you not see at once how much more powerful would be the impression made upon you, how what seemed dim and unreal would have acquired a new

force and reality for you; and in each case you can see this new force was owing to your personal contact, as it were; what had been an abstract truth, or a truth dimly conceived at second-hand, had now become a vivid personal experience.

Now, if this be so in regard to mere outward events, how much more true is it when applied in the sphere of morality and religion. Here it almost seems as if we could gain nothing except through contact with others. If it were possible to isolate any human being completely from all contact with his fellows, do you think he could have any idea of the virtues of truth or charity, of purity or self-denial? I, for my part, believe it would be utterly impossible. I believe it is no more possible to have a human being moral or religious, or even reasonable, apart from the fellowship and influence of others, than it is to have a limb which is not part of a living human body. We grow in all our life out of the family and the state as the branch grows out of the tree, and that is why God has set us in the membership of the Church, for a religious life, entirely apart and alone, is both impossible and inconceivable. But suppose we have obtained some moral and religious knowledge, in what way, I may ask, does it ever become real to us; how is it that we ever learn to believe in truth and honour, in purity, in mercy, in forgiveness, in trust and love towards God? I believe, in every case, it is by seeing them embodied in an actual human life. The child receives its first lesson of reverence and religion when it sees father and mother bow themselves in prayer; and in after life it is the spectacle of goodness, which we can neither disbelieve nor explain away, that makes religion a reality beyond dispute. The blood of her martyrs has ever been the seed of the Church. When arguments have failed to convince, when church services have been powerless to attract, the lives of her saints have laid irresistible hold upon men.

Once, brethren, goodness was embodied in the very highest form in an actual human life. All that you could conceive of stainless inward purity, of an elevation of soul

above the slightest influence of low desire, was there; it, moreover, was a truth that never faltered under the slightest shadow of a lie, a purpose that never swerved aside from the pursuit of the noblest aim, a gentleness so sweet that it could fondle little children and speak blessing in death, a love so wide and untiring that it gave its whole existence freely up for others, a forgiveness so pure and brotherly that it drew the outcast to noble repentance and renewal, and a piety so elevated that it made life one long prayer—one unbroken communion with God. Such a life as this was once actually lived on earth. It is no dream, though it more than fulfils all the highest human conceptions. It is nineteen centuries old; yet all that I have said as to the character of that life is the most indisputable fact in history. Men have differed as to the interpretation to be put on that existence—whether He should be called Son of Man or Son of God; but no one, however he has scrutinized it, no one who has the smallest right to be heard has ever doubted that that life was, in the highest sense, holy and divine.

We should expect that life to influence men as no other life has ever done, and so, by the confession even of infidels, has it been. But I do not now draw your attention to the influence, which, beyond all question, the life of Christ should have on every human soul; I do not now insist on how it has made goodness and God for ever real to us; I do not now urge on you that this life must be ruling your life, unless you have sold yourself to evil; but I point to the emphatic testimony this life has given to the truth of immortality; my text is the words of Jesus, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

And remember, brethren, if these words were mere words of *testimony* only, they would carry a right to belief beyond all other witness. To the Christian Church, believing in Christ as the Son of God, they are like all His sayings, most certainly true; to all men they come with the weight of His spotless life and character in them. But they are not words of mere testimony; they share the peculiarity of many other sayings of Christ, in that He does not claim

to speak or bear witness, but rather Himself to be the living and actual embodiment of what He reveals, and just as elsewhere He says, "I am the Light," and "I am the Truth," so here He says, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

The life beyond death is not simply borne witness to by Christ; this truth is not merely stamped with His authority and approval, it is not merely something you cannot set aside without casting discredit on His testimony, but it is so inwoven with His very life, that you can only get rid of the one by getting rid of the other too; it is no abstract truth, but part of His very being.

Let me try, then, to show you how the very life of Christ contains in it this great truth; and first, I remark, the earthly life and activity of Christ involves the immortality of man.

Suppose we were to take no higher view of the earthly life of our Lord than that which some have held—namely, that He was a pre-eminently good Man, that He lived a life of self-denial, and died a martyr's death—even then, brethren (and remember this, at least, is what all must admit of Christ), even then, the mere existence of Christ involves our immortality. For what, on any supposition, do I see in the life of Christ? I behold an activity most unwearied in toiling for others, a self-denial that is ever giving itself freely away, a love that seems to have no limit, and a forgiveness that knows no end; and all this not directed to the mere outward comfort of man, not to make His bodily and earthly existence more tolerable. It is quite true that Christ cured the sick, but He probably made many more forsake comfort and endure privation; and He declared Himself that He "came not to send peace, but a sword." If, therefore, there were no life to come, the whole life and activity of Christ was a mistake. He would have disturbed men for no cause; He would be guilty of ruining the lives of His apostles and messengers; and all His own activity and labour would be worse than thrown away.

But, more than that, there is another argument still. Either Christ was God, or he was not. If He were, then

if men are not immortal God is in contradiction to Himself. For what do I see in Christ? Do I not see Him taking infinite pains to fan into a flame the smallest spark of goodness in even the most sinful soul, and in countless parables telling us that the great Father cares for even the obscurest or most sinful life. In what horrible contradiction to all this, then, would not the action of God in heaven be who, if man is not immortal, sees with unconcern all the generations of men descending to death and nothingness? But even if you take Christ to be only a man, the endless life of men is no less a necessity. For otherwise, we should have the monstrous conclusion forced upon us that a mere man like ourselves was infinitely nobler and better than God, in that, while God was deaf to all the hopes and prayers of the creatures He made, while He mocked them with the desire for a heaven and hereafter they should never see, one of these could Himself live only to make others better, and could give His own life away simply that they might be lifted to a nobler life.

In truth we may say that every noble man, everyone who lives a pure and elevated and self-denying life, is a proof in this and other ways of man's immortality; and let us thank God we are never without such testimonies; that they are sown, as thick as stars in the night, on every page of history. But all lives must yield in importance and goodness to the life of Christ; and, I say, here we have the first proof of the truth of Christ's words, in that unless that holiest life were the hugest mistake, unless man be better than God, there must be for each a resurrection and a life to come.

But, secondly, Christ is Himself the Resurrection and the Life, because His own rising from the dead is a demonstration of both.

Brethren, you have often heard it said that our religion is above and beyond all others a historical religion. We have not, as the Apostle says, "followed cunningly devised fables;" the great events on which our faith rests were done in the full light of history, and are as certain as any past event can be. No one but a madman or a fool has

ever doubted the actual life of Jesus. His life and deeds are as assured a certainty as our own existence. Now that life closed here with His triumphant resurrection from the dead, and, though some have doubted that, it is beyond all His other miracles one which it is impossible to set aside. One of the acutest scholars of modern times, who has examined the whole gospel history with a most jealous and scrutinizing eye, has said, "the fact of the resurrection of Christ cannot itself be called into doubt, any more than the historical certainty of the assassination of Cæsar."

I do not quote this testimony as if there were any here who doubted the actual fact of our Lord's rising from the dead, but to show you, that even as a fact of history, it stands among the most established. But to the Christian, it adds immeasurably to the words of Christ, that He who claimed to be Himself the Resurrection, not only met death and rose triumphantly from it, but met it in no accidental way. He had looked at it long and fearlessly, He had set His face steadfastly through all these years to go up to His Cross; and it was in the full clear knowledge of death and what lay beyond, having already in His thought anticipated and overcome it, that our Lord could say, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

But, lastly, brethren, this claim of Christ is most certainly true, because it is He who is already in each Christian soul the power of an immortal life.

I have tried to show how Christ could claim to be the actual embodiment of our immortality, because in His own earthly life there is involved the truth of our endless existence, so that unless you set aside the one, you must accept the other; and again, because it is not only most certain that He Himself rose from the dead, but that He all along looked at death and saw the life which lay beyond it. But these reasons would be insufficient to account for the words of Christ, and would fail of giving full comfort and courage to us, unless I could add, as I now do, that Christ is already in each Christian soul, the power of an immortal life. Observe that Jesus joins together the two

ideas of rising again and continuous living—"I am the Resurrection *and the Life*,"—and by that He means that death does not even break or interrupt the life of a Christian is clear, for He immediately adds, "he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." The life Christ possesses and communicates is something which death cannot even reach. And if it be objected that this would seem to limit immortality to those who are actually and consciously Christian, I reply, that every man is, in one sense, related to Christ, for He is "the light that lightens every man." And thus, even the heathen and sinful are immortal, just in virtue (though they are ignorant of it) of their relation to Him in whom alone is life and immortality. But to the Christian this relation is clearly felt and known. That our religious life is only possible by so close a relation to Christ that we call it a "vital" or living "union" all branches of the Church most firmly believe, and every Christian has realised in his own experience. "I am the Vine," said Christ, "and ye are the branches, without Me ye can do nothing." "I am with you alway, even until the end of the world." And so St. Paul speaks continually of a man being "in Christ," and describes his own life by saying, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me."

Now this life which is already in each Christian as part, and the deepest part of his very being, is already what I have called the power of an immortal existence. What is said of Christ is true of every disciple, "He could not be holden of death." The resurrection is, in one sense, a future event to us, but in another and deeper sense it is a present and actual experience. In the life of prayer, and faith, and aspiration; in the nearness of Christ, in the endeavour to be led by His spirit and follow His example; in all that constitutes our deepest Christian experience, we are already, brethren, lifted beyond the power of death. Death, as a future experience, we know to be inevitable; as a painful and trying ordeal we can never speak of it lightly; as interrupting much that was loved and sweet to us, we would

avoid it if we could, just as Christ Himself prayed to the Father "that He might let that cup of sorrow pass." A painful experience—a trial, "the last enemy"—that our natural feeling prompts us to think of it; but there its power ends. We dare not, we cannot, as Christians, think of it as a destruction, a loss, hardly even as a separation or a sleep. The life we have within us even now is the certainty of a victory over the grave. Every prayer we breathe, every pure thought, every conquered temptation, every angry temper checked, every thoughtful kindness for others, these are the pulses of the life of Christ in our souls; these are the inspirations of the spirit of God; and unless God Himself could die, unless Christ never rose from yon rocky tomb, we must live on untouched by death—rather lifted up by it into a fuller and higher life. The root buried in the winter earth needs no prophesying that it shall rise into flowering life in the spring. The life is already there; it already possesses within itself the power that shall raise it above the mould into beauty and light. And our immortality, brethren, is no guess, and no mere probability; we already, in so far as we are living the Christian life, have in us the living certainty of a deathless existence; we live in Christ, and Christ in us, and He not only promises, but He *is*, in Himself, "the Resurrection and the Life."

IV.

THE DIVINE GIFT OF SLEEP.

“HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.”—*Ps. cxxvii. 2.*

TO understand the original meaning and connection of these words, we must look to the psalm in which they occur. It is that famous sacred song of which the first verse is blazoned in the arms of our own Scottish capital—“Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the City, the watchman waketh but in vain.” This psalm probably belongs, not to the triumphant time of Jewish history, but to those evil days when men were made only too familiar with defeat and oppression. But it was in these troublous times that the grandest qualities of the people were often brought out; in the fiery furnace of affliction the hearts of these ancient saints and heroes were refined to pure gold. It was from some such saintly and heroic heart that this song of lofty and noble confidence came. Those whom he sought to inspirit and rouse had become despondent; all things were against them; the times were evil and their lot was hard. To them, as to the sceptical writer of the book of Ecclesiastes in a similar time, all things seemed full of trouble, and the burden of life was only “vanity and vexation of spirit.” They were a small and oppressed people, and it was vain for them to struggle to build a home for themselves among the nations of the earth; their house would soon perish, and in some more devastating conquest their very name would be swept away. What were they that they should attempt to contend against these giant Empires of the East? Their children were but a handful; their race must soon be utterly overthrown.

How natural these complaints were, and how apparently utterly justified, every one can feel who has read in history the frequent story of a small people struggling against overwhelming odds. To the Greeks, when the countless hosts

of Persia moved down on them; to our own Scots, when England sought to master them; to the Dutch, when they rose against the mighty power of Spain, it seemed almost useless to contend against the overmastering tide. And defeat after defeat—the overthrow and death of some of the noblest leaders seemed to prove this, and to show how hopeless was the struggle. And then it is that some great patriot leader comes, and proves how truly he has been called “a divine madman.” In spite of all experience he persists; against hope he believes in hope; he has the noble confidence of the saints, and boldly adopts as his their motto, “I believe because it is impossible;” “seest thou that great mountain before us, it shall yet become a plain.” God is not always on the side of the big battalions; one true man shall yet chase a thousand:

“Freedom’s battle, once begun,
Bequeathed from bleeding sire to son,
Though baffled oft, is ever won.”

God is with the right cause, and shall make it ultimately victorious, though only one solitary man were on its side—an Athanasius against the world.

It is not to the whole psalm, but to one expression in it that I direct you for our lesson to-day—“He giveth to His beloved sleep.” Our circumstances may not be similar to those for which this psalm was written, but none the less are the words appropriate for us. For, to say nothing of the wondrous power the Bible has of laying hold on the ever-varying circumstances of men by always addressing itself to that in us which is eternal and unchangeable, the feeling of those for whom this psalm was written is in reality very near to us. Is not the outstanding feature of our time just this, of dissatisfaction and unrest: do we not now hear in many quarters the question put, “Is life worth the living?” are not all classes filled with a vague restlessness, and do not some share the belief that they are unjustly oppressed? is it not the feeling of many that “they rise up early and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrow?”

and is it not seriously questioned by some whether, indeed, it be a good thing to see our population increasing, and whether one can look on playful children and not be full of sadness when we know what is before them? And it is to such thoughts and feelings the words of our text are a reply; it denies not the sorrows and ills of life, it admits the existence of trouble and toil, it acknowledges our experience of oppression and defeat; yet, for all these, it asserts we have a divine defence: there is a refuge for trouble, a soothing gift of God for weariness and toil—"He giveth His beloved sleep." Our subject, then, is the divine defence and love shown in the gift of sleep.

I.—First of all, brethren, look at it in common slumber. Every true view of life must see in its commonest arrangements the hand of God. Either we must take our stand on the dreary creed of the atheist and say "there is no God," or we must see a divine hand moving in every detail of the life of man. Christianity especially teaches us to call nothing common or unclean; it turns the humblest task into a religious duty; it shows us that a Christian spirit can ennoble the meanest service, and boldly says "whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." But there are some parts of human life where we are able to trace a divine purpose of goodness, just as there are others where it is more difficult. As one of our greatest Christian writers has taught us, we should remember that from the nature of the case the present world must largely be to us "a scheme or constitution of things imperfectly comprehended." All the ablest thinkers have ever taught that one of the first and most necessary lessons for men is to know their own ignorance; to recognise the limit of their powers, and not to attempt to pronounce judgment on what they only know in part. Even when a Milton attempts

"To vindicate eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to man,"

he seems to be setting himself a task too large for even his

splendid powers. No doubt Christianity teaches us that "all things work together for good to them that love God;" and this seems to me a truth absolutely inseparable from any true belief in God. But then it is a faith to be held, not a fact to be proved, for the conditions of the proof are not within our power.

Here, however, we are concerned not with the whole life of man, but with one part and aspect of it, and I say that in common slumber we may see a divine gift—a proof of God's goodness. Like all the other best gifts it is absolutely universal. It is as the sunshine and the rain which God sends alike on the evil and the good. Even as these it may be partly within our power, it may be curtailed by the pressure of work or broken by disease and sorrow; but absolutely and altogether no one can rob us of it unless he take our life too; it is one of the conditions so bound up with our very existence, that its appointment irresistibly speaks of the character of God. And if it be so, as assuredly we believe, we should see in it some help afforded to our higher life. For the divine plan of our life seems to be that the lower exists for the higher—the body for the soul—the natural life of man for the spiritual—the temporal for the eternal. Sleep is a condition of man's physical nature, yet it proves itself a divine gift of love by the aid it offers to our nobler life. Think, for example, how largely sleep withdraws us from the world of sense. One of the great difficulties of religion, as every one knows, arises from the importunities of our senses; we are inclined to gratify these at whatever cost, to make them, and not our conscience and reason, the masters of our life. Again, the world of sense—the things we can see, and taste, and handle—is apt to become all to us, and to shut out the impression of an unseen spiritual world, which, though invisible, is nevertheless more real, as it is more important. Now sleep, withdrawing us almost entirely from the world of sense, shows us how closely mystery touches our common life, and is an admonition that the world of sense is neither the only world nor the highest.

But again, there are many for whom this work-a-day world is full of sadness. Times of trouble come to all, and even when no special trial weighs on them many find what the poet calls

"The weary and the heavy weight of all this unintelligible world," the sense of the mystery and disappointment of life too heavy for them. Now God does not relieve us from this, for it is part doubtless of the necessary discipline of life to pass through it; but he intermits it; it falls off in sleep; through that divine gift we bathe in the river of forgetfulness.

All the poets have joined in praising this aspect of sleep. It "lays its finger on the lips of care, till they forget to complain;" it is "the poor man's wealth and the prisoner's release;" it "visits sorrow as a comforter." But yet one other way in which sleep ministers to man's better life is by breaking to a certain extent the power of habit. Through sleep, instead of life running on in one unbroken course, it is separated into days—and each morning we, so to speak, make a fresh beginning. It is this which makes what one has called the resurrection-feeling of morning; the possibility which, perhaps, all feel in some degree, of making a new start, the call, as one great teacher of our own time has put it—

"Lo, here hath been dawning
Another blue day,
Say wilt thou let it
Slip useless away."

When we think, then, on all these things, that it dulls the importunities of sense, gives rest to weariness and forgetfulness to sorrow, and makes almost all men feel how, with each fresh day, they are called to a newer life, surely we can appreciate the words of the text, and see how sleep is a divine gift.

But the language of the text means more than this. It speaks especially of the religious man, and of such an one when he is in despondency and trouble; besides, the words, as literally rendered, should probably be "God giveth to His beloved in sleep," and the idea taken in connection

with the whole psalm seems undoubtedly to be that not only is sleep itself a good gift of God—something which may minister to man's higher life—but that in sleep God is bestowing the defence and comfort that the good man needs. There is a striking Persian saying, "God gives sleep to the bad that the good may be undisturbed;" but the thought of our text is deeper and truer, and more akin to that noble saying of another psalm, "Behold He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

But not only is God the unsleeping protector, especially near to all who love Him, but to him who serves God, even in sleep, all things are serving, and gifts are unconsciously descending on him.

It was with this great truth that the pious and patriotic Psalmist could inspire and uplift a despondent people. Their enemies were powerful, but since they were cruel and unjust, their mightiest cities and fortresses were vainly reared, and their army of sentinels could not avert the stroke which the mighty Watchman in the skies and Ruler of nations would send. And though they themselves were dispirited and feeble, God had not only sent on them His beloved His gift of sleep, but even while they slept His forces of justice and goodness were working for them, and all unseen His blessing was descending on their more faithful and noble hearts—"He giveth to His beloved in sleep."

Brethren, this is a most necessary truth for us to learn. To the man who loves God, who serves Christ, who seeks to lead a brave, pure, and unselfish life, not only does sleep come as a divine gift, but in the unconscious part of his life, God, in ways unknown to him, is blessing him. You know the child's beautiful fairy story, that on Christmas night some good angel comes down and leaves gifts for him while he slumbers. This old legend enshrines a divine truth, "God giveth to His beloved in sleep." Our soul's salvation, brethren, is infinitely nearer to the heart of God than to our own. I do not say this to prompt you to be idle. Not one of us can afford to be less resolute and watchful than we are. But if we really know our own hearts and the struggle

we are engaged in, we should despair if we thought it depended all on ourselves. "It was not I, but the grace of God that was in me," said the noblest and most heroic toiler, the greatest soldier and saint in the history of Christendom. And that has been the experience of all those who have fought the good fight of faith—that other noble psalm has spoken the deepest experience of God's people always—"If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, the stream had gone over our soul." If we would live an earnest Christian life we must have this to fall back upon—"God giveth to his beloved in sleep."

II.—I would end, but there is another, a deeper, more blessed, yet still allowable application of these words. It is one of the blessings we owe to Christianity that it has substituted for the other and harsher names of death the gentler and more hopeful word, sleep. The likeness between death and sleep has always been remarked, and one great English writer has aptly said "Sleep is Death's younger brother, and so like him that I never dare trust him without my prayers." Though hurled to such a violent death, it is beautifully said of the first Christian martyr "he fell on sleep," and the dead are spoken of as those "asleep in Jesus;" even our name for a graveyard, "cemetery," means literally "sleeping-place." In this more solemn use of the word we may assuredly say "God giveth to His beloved sleep." To those who have lived a Christian life, death is not only softened to a sleep, but it is a divinely-given sleep, in which richest gifts of God are concealed. No one ought to speak of the solemn close of life with light bravado, but we are untrue to our faith when we look on death with doubt and fear. It is in an entirely Christian spirit that one noble English poet has spoken of

"Dear, beauteous Death, the jewel of the just,
Shining nowhere but in the dark;"

and that one of the best and most devoted of modern Englishmen said, "Dear, wise, kind Death, when will you come and tell me all I want to know?" And I close with

the words expressly written on our text by one of the truest and noblest singers of modern days, the greatest of English poetesses, whose life, so full of suffering, could neither still her song nor stifle her faith:—

“ Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward into souls afar,
Along the psalmist’s music deep,
Now, tell me, if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ What would we give to our beloved :
The hero’s heart to be unmoved,
The poet’s star-tuned harp to sweep,
The patriot’s voice to teach and rouse,
The monarch’s crown to light the brows ?—
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ What do we give to our beloved ?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to over weep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake :
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ ‘ Sleep soft, beloved ! ’ we sometimes say,
Who have no time to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep ;
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ O earth, so full of dreary noises !
O men, with wailing in their voices !
O delvèd gold, the wailer’s heap !
O strife, O curse that o’er it fall !
God strikes a silence through you all,
And, ‘ giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ His dews drop mutely on the hill,
 His cloud above it saileth still,
 Though on the slope men sow and reap ;
 More softly than the dew is shed,
 Or cloud is floated overhead,
 ‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ Ay, men may wonder, when they scan
 A living, thinking, feeling man
 Confirmed in such a rest to keep ;
 But angels say—and through the word
 I think their happy smile is heard—
 ‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ For me, my heart, that erst did go
 Most like a tired child at a show,
 That sees through tears the mummer’s leap,
 Would now its weary vision close,
 Would childlike on His love repose
 Who ‘ giveth His beloved sleep.’

“ And friends, dear friends, when it shall be
 That this low breath is gone from me,
 And round my bier ye come to weep,
 Let one, most loving of ye all,
 Say ‘ Not a tear must o’er her fall’—
 ‘ He giveth His beloved sleep.’”

V.

IDLE WORDS.

“ EVERY IDLE WORD THAT MEN SHALL SPEAK, THEY SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT THEREOF IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.”—*St. Matt. xii. 36.*

WERE I to come forward on my own responsibility to address you on the importance of every word you speak—were I to affirm that not the lightest word you utter is without its influence upon your own and other souls—were I to say that even for every careless, much more for every evil, word, you shall have to answer to God on the great day of judgment—it would be only too natural for you to retort that these are the words of one who knows nothing of practical life—the words of a preacher who would turn the whole world into a cloister, and that it is impossible that the merciful God will call us to account for every careless saying.

But, brethren, the words I preach from to-day are His to whose authority the whole Christian world bows; they are His who read the human heart as never mortal did before or since; they are His of whom is emphatically recorded “He knew what was in man;” they are His whom all the ages adore as the merciful and forgiving, and yet they declare, without any qualification, that “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” The scope, brethren, of this solemn warning is as wide as it could be made. It condemns not only all words which are positively and directly evil, but all which are not clearly and consciously good. The word “idle” might be equally, perhaps more correctly, rendered “useless;” and thus all words come under the range of Christ’s condemnation which do not tend to good. For here we encounter the lesson which meets us everywhere in Christian teaching, and with which every sound moralist agrees, that there can be no neutral actions in our

lives; there are no doings of ours of so little importance as not to be reckoned either good or bad; everything we do bears its decisive character of right or wrong, as Christ Himself says "He that is not with Me is against Me; he that gathereth not for Me, scattereth abroad."

I wish especially, however, to single out to-day some classes of idle words which, though they are only too common among us, are yet worthy of special condemnation as utterly inconsistent with the Christian character, and more powerful for evil than we commonly think.

I.—And first, I instance *Slandrous* words. I do so because if you look to the chapter you will find it was these especially which were the immediate occasion of our text. Our Lord had performed one of His many miracles, He had wrought a cure more than usually striking, for He had healed a poor demoniac who was both blind and dumb. Evidently the crowd were greatly impressed, and began to wonder if He who could do such mighty acts were not after all really the Messiah. Some Pharisees, however, who had come from Jerusalem full of enmity and party spirit, were among the crowd. They were unable to deny the miracle which had been, as it were, wrought before their very eyes, but they were filled with double hatred at the effect it had upon the crowd. In their own hearts they were almost convinced that He who had done such a wonderful and beneficent thing must be peculiarly blessed of God. Yet, crushing down this conviction, they took refuge in a lie too transparent not to be visible to themselves—determined at all hazards at once to retain their hold over the people and to crush the influence of Jesus—they boldly invented the monstrous slander, "He casts out the demons by the aid of Beelzebub; it is by the existence of the supreme evil one he has wrought this seeming miracle of good." No wonder that this drew from Christ perhaps His most severely solemn warning. He saw in their state of soul the highest reach of wickedness, and pronounced it the one unpardonable sin, for they had blasphemed the Holy Ghost, and

consciously and deliberately called good, evil. And as Christ thinks on their awful state of soul—the dark, suspicious, cruel spirit of which this accusation was the outcome—he sees the evil consequences that attend the lightest ill word man can speak, and so gives to all ages the solemn warning, “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

Brethren, we shrink back in horror—the whole Christian world does so—from those who drew from Christ this awful rebuke, who already in their heart had determined to kill Him, and who became afterwards His cruel murderers. But this spirit did not die with these, it lived again even in those who called themselves the successors and followers of Jesus; nay, it is only too active still in the hearts of many who are to be found in every congregation. Look, for example, at the so-called religious world, and is it not the same spirit you see at work there? When those who belong to one Church or sect dislike the good which is done by those of another, and begin to suggest that, after all, however holy the action seems, the motive must have been impure and evil; when the bigoted Protestant or the bigoted Catholic derides and despises the good done by his brother of a different church; when the Presbyterian or the Episcopalian questions the purity of the motives of those who have evidently accomplished some noble work, because they do not belong to his own sect; in all these cases, brethren, we have the same spirit which Christ condemned.

Nor is it less so in the political world, where men are only too ready to cast all manner of evil insinuations against those who differ from them in opinion. And though I will be told this is a necessity of public life, I must refuse to believe that a spirit which so clearly transgresses the law of Christ is unavoidable. It may be a necessity for the unscrupulous partisan to say all the evil things he can invent or imagine of his opponents, but the public service of the country would be all the more nobly done if every one, from highest to lowest, had the manly honesty, not to

say the Christian charity, to rejoice in every public benefit by whomsoever accomplished, and never to soil the lips by mean insinuations against any rival.

But, brethren, it is not in the public life of churches or parties that the spirit of slander works its deadliest evil. No, it is in the daily intercourse of man with man—it is in the every-day life of the very humblest of us—it may be even in the rural quiet of a country parish such as this. And I charge you, beware of the slightest encouragement you give to such a spirit—beware how you allow your lips to form one single evil insinuation, one false accusation, one uncharitable expression against anyone. Even open violence and assault looks manly and noble in comparison with the covert sneer and the whispered depreciation. If you can say no good about another, better be silent altogether.

If you think you can reasonably suspect as not altogether pure the motives of an action which the world admires, yet remember how difficult it is even for the best to make the springs of action perfectly clean.

“Go to your bosom ;
Knock there and ask your heart what it doth know
That's like your brother's fault : if it confess
A natural guiltiness such as is his,
Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue
Against your brother's name.”

Think on what a slander is; the very word is significant. It comes from the Greek word “σκανδαλον,” a “stumbling-block,” so often used in the New Testament. He who utters a slander is putting in his brother's way a stumbling-block, something which will cause him to trip and fall. He is coming under that terrible sentence of Christ's where He said “He that casteth a σκανδαλον before one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and he were drowned in the depths of the sea.” Our common and careless proverb says “words break no bones,” but I say on the

contrary, that a word is often more cruel, as well as more cowardly, than a blow; and that not once, but again and again, a slanderous word, a whispered insinuation, an uncharitable speech, a careless but cruel charge—such as, God forgive us, we are all only too apt to give expression to—has checked the spring of repentance, arrested the growth of goodness, ruined a human soul, made shipwreck of a whole life. Let us remember that the very name given in the New Testament to the head of all evil means an “accuser” or “slanderer,” and let us determine, by God’s grace, to play no *devil’s* part in life. Rather let us aspire to earn the noble praise bestowed on a prince of our own, by our greatest living singer—

“He spake no slander
No, nor listened to it.”

II. Another class of “idle words” specially to be condemned are *profane* words. I mention these, brethren, because, like the former, they are immediately suggested by the connection of our text (for it was profanity as well as slander which lurked in the spirit of those Pharisees). I know there are many who think that profanity is to be greatly, if not altogether, excused because it is the result of a habit, and the swearer will often be heard saying in his defence “Oh, I did not mean what I said.” But if this excuse is to be admitted it excuses all crimes whatsoever. There is perhaps no single enormity man has ever done, of which it could not be pleaded with equal truth that it was the result of habit, and that the offender did not clearly know what he did. It is a habit for the liar to speak untruth, for the thief to steal, for the sensualist to commit impurity—a habit often no less gradually and unconsciously formed than swearing—but would that acquit them in any court in the country, or does it still the accusations of their own conscience? Even the murderer very seldom realizes what he is doing when he slays. Blinded by passion, frenzied by fear or hate, he is no more clearly conscious than the swearer is of the full measure of his crime. I

admit there is a clear difference between the profanity, which with so many is the result of an idle and careless habit, an open deliberate blasphemy of God and goodness, though I am fain to believe the latter but seldom exists. None the less, brethren, is it needful to remember that a sin is still a sin, though it be the result of habit—a crime does not cease to be a crime because it is done in passion and without a clear consciousness of its evil.

But it will be said that sin and crime are too serious words to apply to such a light and trivial offence as swearing. Thank God, brethren, the day has gone by—and gone, let us hope, never to return—when it was thought indispensable in a gentleman to season his speech with oaths; when no one could hope to be accounted fashionable who did not, even in his own house and before his own wife and daughters, indulge in habitual profanity.

But if anyone think that the fact that it was once approved of excuses or makes light the sin, let him remember that even in civilised and Christian countries society has justified many intolerable wrongs, many deadly sins. Poisoning was at one time almost allowed; assassination was justified. The same age which approved of swearing upheld slavery, enjoined the legal murder of duelling, spoke lightly of adultery, derided public honour, and praised as the first gentleman of Europe one who, if he now sat upon the British throne, would be hurled from it in instant revolution by the moral indignation of the whole country.

But it will be said swearing, after all, does no injury, for God is too great to be offended by our words, and they can do no injury to any other. No injury, brethren? I grant you our strongest, coarsest blasphemy cannot drop the smallest soilure or stain on the bright floor of God's heaven, much less can they rise even to touch His footstool, any more than all the accumulated smoke of all the furnaces of earth can blot from the majestic sun one ray of dazzling gold.

But swearing does no injury? Profane words have no ill

results? Nay, brethren, put away that illusion. They injure the soul from which they came; they do the worst injury on all within their reach.

As the Romanists confessed when they burnt the martyrs, that the smoke of them infected all on whom it blew; so, be assured, is it with profane words. Why, even little children—God help them—even those who have no more than learned to speak, may be heard any day in our large cities uttering whole sentences of profanity, unconscious of what they say. Would any father here think it no injury to fill the mouth of his lisping child with dreadful oaths?

Were I addressing an audience of open unbelievers in Christianity—were I speaking to any fair-minded sceptics to whom God and Christ and all other holy names are nearly, if not altogether, unmeaning and empty sounds, even then I should have the fullest confidence they would join with me in condemning swearing as an injurious and evil habit. But I cannot forget I am addressing a Christian congregation, and that the vice I am condemning is indulged in by men at least nominally Christian. And I will not say to you, if you have any love and reverence for Christ, you must try to keep His solemn command, “swear not at all;” but I would simply ask you to remember that these names which in swearing you drag into your idlest conversation, which you use in those passionate moments of which afterwards you are ashamed, which you associate with all dishonouring and polluting things; these names which you thus do all you can to soil and degrade with the ignoblest uses to which words can be applied, these names are what? Some idle sounds, some quite unmeaning expressions, terms hateful and despised by all men? Nay, brethren, quite otherwise. They are the names at which countless generations of men have bowed in adoration, which are sacred every day on the lips of the dying as the one hope and blessing left to them in the whole world, which you yourselves first learned at your mother’s knee when she taught you to lisp your earliest prayer, which, even now, if you have any religion at all, are dearer, more reverent and be-

loved than any other words. O brethren, it is no light sin to use such words in vulgar swearing, for you are thereby striking at the very heart of all reverence and all religion!

When the splendid Cathedral of St. Paul's was being built in London by the great Sir Christopher Wren, that famous architect had a notice placarded all over the works saying that, as that building was meant for the service of God, any workman indulging in swearing would instantly be dismissed. But, brethren, since the whole world is the house of God, swearing anywhere is profanity no less than if it were in cathedral or church; and I call upon you, as Christian men—nay, I appeal to you simply in the name of true manhood and reverence—never, under any provocation or passion, indulge in swearing yourself, or give it the smallest countenance in others. Listen to one of the wisest of living teachers—to one of the noblest of English writers, whose life is as pure as his eloquence is lofty:—"One thing," says Mr. Ruskin, "One thing I know, and if you live for it you shall know it also, that in reverence is the true joy and crown of life—reverence for all that is great among the living, glorious among the dead, and sacred and adorable in the Powers above us which never die."

Brethren, I must come to a close; I have already detained you too long; and yet I have only spoken of some classes of idle words, and our text warns us against all. But no thoughtful, no religious man, least of all no Christian preacher, can pass from such solemn words as those of the text without wishing to impress on your heart one thing more. You are assured that for every idle word you shall certainly answer to God in the great day of judgment.

Brethren, bethink yourselves, this is no idle tale! A few years more and, like the countless generations before us, we too will have gone from this life to that other world where each human soul shall be judged for the deeds done in the body, and then for every lightest evil word we shall have to answer. Do you say that it is impossible that any record can exist of the countless words of earth's countless millions? do you imagine that not all the recording angels

could keep so vast a reckoning, and that the world itself could not contain the books that should be written? I might reply that all things are possible with God, and that neither you nor I can rightly speak of the mysteries that lie beyond the veil of the present life. I might show you how every religion has taught the truth of a retributive judgment, that almost every great thinker admits its necessity, that every conscience anticipates it, that every page of Scripture declares it. But I can do more. Yes, brethren, strange though it be, I can point you even now to the very volume in which, even as you utter them, every idle word is recorded against you; for I am stating what more than one illustrious thinker has held to be almost proved when I say that each mind (though unknown to itself) retains in its memory the record of every word it has uttered and every deed it has done, and that when quickened by the shock of death we pass into the life beyond, every dimmest trace that memory holds shall stand clearly out in letters of flashing light, so that even from the record in our own souls God may judge us for each idle word.

And science, too, tells us that when we imagine, as we do, that our words die the moment they are uttered, we are entirely wrong. You have seen a boy throw a stone into a pool, and after it has fallen into the water you have noticed the wave spread out in circle after circle. Now so it is with each word we utter; only the wave of sound we have set agoing can never come to an end, and, utterly beyond our power though it be to trace them, we know that there is a sense in which it is scientifically true that every word spoken from the beginning of time still exists. I know that the fields of science and religion are quite distinct, but do we not see here an echo and confirmation, if any such were required, of Christ's own words, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment!"

VI.

TRUE FREEDOM.

"I WILL WALK AT LIBERTY: FOR I SEEK THY PRECEPTS."—*Ps. cxix. 45.*

"THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU FREE."—*St. John viii. 32.*

"WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY."—*2 Cor. iii. 17.*

"THE PERFECT LAW OF LIBERTY."—*St. James i. 25.*

I HAVE chosen these varied verses as our one text to-day because they all agree in setting before us freedom as the one great need of life, and are unanimous in describing its character and the way in which it is to be attained.

It requires no words to convince anyone that freedom is a most desirable thing. When, some fifty years ago, our country at last decreed that the slaves in our colonies should be released from their thralldom on a certain day, we are told that such was the excitement among them that on the evening before no one thought of sleep, and many climbed a lofty hill where they could catch the earliest rays of the returning sun, and waited eagerly during the long night for the first sign of the morning that was to make them for ever freemen.

Every heart responds to the words of one of our earliest Scottish poets—

"Oh, freedom is a noble thing."

It is this which lights up the otherwise gloomy and blood-stained page of history; it is this which rouses us to warmest admiration of the great heroes and warriors of bygone times. The brightest pages of old Greek and Roman story, the great deeds in the life of modern Europe, the undying memories of our own land, all derive their glory and unfading interest from this, that they were struggles for liberty. And the longer and more dreadful the contest was—when father had to bequeath it to son, when in it men counted not their own lives dear to them—so the greater does our

admiration and interest grow ; for we feel, and rightly feel, that no price was too high to pay, no sacrifice too dear to undergo, for that highest of all mere national and social possessions—liberty !

But it is not on the battlefield alone men have been pursuing freedom. As our great patriot tells us,

“ Peace hath her victories
Not less renowned than war,”

and bloodless battles have been fought and won to secure and extend the liberties of all. In our own day, especially, this has been one great idea generally diffused and acknowledged ; and now there is no one, in our own country at least, who does not stand in full and complete possession of the utmost civil liberty.

To-day, brethren, I speak to you of another and still nobler freedom ; of a liberty still more necessary for you and still more to be prized. In the case of political freedom, we indeed “ reap where we have not sown ; ” “ other men laboured, and we have entered into their labours.” Read history and you are struck with wonder, with admiration, and, if you have any soul in you at all, with overpowering gratitude to the departed great, when you see by what slow and painful efforts, at what cost of life and labour, at what sacrifices on the scaffold and the stake, in battlefield and in exile, our civil and religious freedom was secured. But there was a price greater still, a liberator more august than these, a sacrifice far more complete and enduring paid to secure this higher freedom of which I speak. What do we mean by freedom in the ordinary sense of the word ? We mean the opposite of slavery ; we mean that no one has a right to tyrannise over another ; that to sell men as cattle or to whip them as brutes is a crime of the highest degree against our manhood and the God in whose image it was made. We mean that no one should be insulted because of his position or birth, or ill-treated because of his opinions ; that, in so far as they refrain from injuring others or themselves, each rational human being should be allowed to

follow the mode of life which they choose themselves, and that no one should be permitted to put any restraint or hindrance upon them. To be free, in short, is to be perfectly untrammelled in the ordering of our outward life. But let me ask any of you, is this the highest conceivable freedom; is this the one indispensable condition for man; is this the one blessing which can turn all life to sweetness and fill it with songs of victory? Were anyone to tell you "now you are free, no one can tyrannise over you, no one can compel you to what you refuse, you are master over your outward life, therefore all the discord and dissatisfaction of existence are forever abolished to you," would not these words sound to you as bitter irony? Would not you be driven to reply, and rightly too, "It is not my life without me but my life within that is the chief concern; after all, freedom or slavery only touch my outward actions, and only some of these. But this world in which I live every hour and moment of my existence, this heart, and mind, and soul, who is to give me freedom there, who can make me there master and lord of my life? When I feel within myself the struggle of good and evil; when every hour of my existence I pass in a more or less keen encounter of temptation; when conscience accuses me, and duty appeals to me, and contrariwise. Passion masters me, and habit lords it over me; when daily and almost hourly my experience is 'the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.' I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to it: is not the overpowering cry forced from my lips—'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'"

Brethren, in nothing is the truth of Christianity made more apparent, in nothing does it better authenticate its divine message, than that it laid its finger precisely upon this inward slavery as the curse of human life, and set itself to amend this as the indispensable condition of all human improvement. It was not that it was careless of civil liberty, that it had no regard for outward political freedom.

Do not believe those who tell you (as some do in the present day) that the Church is the enemy of freedom, and that Christianity has done nothing for men's liberties. Of all calumnies and untruths this is the greatest. In our own country it is especially disproved, for it was the Scottish Church and not the Scottish State that repeatedly fought the battle of freedom, and that under God was the means of securing it not only for our own land but for our united empire.

But it has been so everywhere. Almost every great liberator and patriot in Christendom has been animated by religion, and every great movement for freedom in modern times could be traced back to the Reformation, the very soul and heart of which was religious. It was the ideas, the beliefs which Christianity implanted in the world, which made freedom inevitable and gave it its overpowering strength. Whenever, and so far as, men received the teaching of Christ, slavery became impossible, women ceased to be degraded, children to be despised, kings could not tyrannise, class could not lord it over class. Christianity, in so far as it wins its way, brings with it inevitably and irresistibly the true gospel of liberty, equality, brotherhood.

But, brethren, the worst slavery is in the soul within; and if it were not there it could never come into the world without. It is from the heart, as Christ taught us, all evil thoughts and passions come. Two of the greatest thinkers of all time—two of those who read the human heart as almost no mere uninspired men have ever done—Plato and Shakespeare, unite with all Holy Scripture in describing the natural state and condition of man's heart and life as one of grievous disorder and degrading slavery.

O, my brethren, in so far as any one of you here has shut out the grace of God, and is living without the power and presence of Christ in his daily life, you are a slave, far more degraded, tasting a worse and more bitter bondage than chains and whips ever brought. And it is in God's name I bring you His message of freedom; it is to His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I point you as the great

Liberator. He declares His own mission to be "to preach deliverance to the captives and set at liberty those that are bound." Receive His truth into your heart and you are free; abide in His spirit and you have liberty; walk in His precepts and you have emancipation. For, brethren, this is the indispensable condition of true freedom, this is what favours its very nature and life, this is how Christian liberty is secured in a man's soul.

Freedom, even in the outward political sense, is not the mere absence of all conditions and restraints. That would be not freedom but lawlessness, not liberty but licence, and it could only issue in anarchy worse than any tyranny. The true freeman is devoted to the laws of his country, and not only joyfully submits to them but identifies his freedom with them, and joins, in one expression, "laws and liberties" as the object of his devotion.

It is likewise with inward spiritual freedom. All the verses in our text agree in teaching us its one indispensable condition. The Psalmist says, "I will walk at liberty: for I will seek Thy precepts;" Christ says, "The truth shall make you free;" St. Paul says, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" and St. James speaks of "the perfect law of liberty."

Now this which is variously called a body of precepts—the Truth, the Spirit of the Lord, the perfect law—is but one and the same thing, though we may give it many different names. But what it is we best know when, in accordance with the most frequent representations in the New Testament and the deepest experience of the Saints of all ages, we think of it and call it nothing else than the Living Christ in the soul of man. He who had this power present in his heart and life, he only is in any real sense a Christian, and he only knows what it is to be truly free. For in so far as Christ lives in us we are not receiving some foreign power into our being, but we are then first and most truly recovering our own selves. The spirit of Christ which breathes itself into our nature—the precepts he inspires us to love and follow—the truth he makes us in our inmost

soul believe as the foundation of all reality—the law by which henceforth we feel in our noblest wills bound—these are not something which compel us by their authority or their might to do what is contrary to our real nature, and which carry us somewhere in a different direction from what our life would properly seek; on the contrary, we feel, as we go on, that we thereby realise our nature in its fullest and highest degree, and our life attains a fulness, a power, a sense of reaching its true end such as without this would be impossible. For, brethren, Christ is, if I may so speak, your true self; in His manhood he is the perfect example and ideal of your true life; in His Godhead He is that spirit in whom your spirit has always lain, and from which you cannot go, and by loving submission means self-control, the law of Christ, the highest and fullest liberty. But he who by becoming Christ's slave (according is the Apostle Paul's favourite expression) has reached the noblest freedom, is not only free in his soul within; not only do evil passions cease to make him their sport, and evil habits no longer hold him in degrading slavery; not only are every malice and lust being cast out from the restored and purified temple of his spirit, but he is free over his outward life too.

How many a man is a slave to things outside him—incapable of any real sense of freedom—ruled as remorselessly by things which are not himself as ever any poor slave was by his driver. Do we not know men and women whose business, whose daily round of work, whose money, whose social engagements, whose pleasure, whose infirmity of temper, whose ill-health of body, or the apprehension of some future evil, as poverty or sickness or death, really rules over them as with a rod of iron—is master of them almost entirely, body and soul?

Alas, my brethren, none of us have far to seek for such; almost none of us realise what it is to be really free as Christ would have us, with the glorious liberty of the children of God. He who is Christ's freeman is free of the whole universe. Over every conceivable accident and chance and experience of life he is by Christ's spirit master and lord.

Poverty or wealth, sickness or health, joy or sorrow, hope and fear, these are alike his servants, to be ruled by him; he has a right to say with the grand Christian stoicism of St. Paul, "None of these things move me." "All these things are mine, whether life or death, or things present or things to come, all are mine, and I am Christ's, and Christ is God's."

"That man is free from servile bands
Of hope to rise or fear to fall;
Lord of himself though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all."

VII.

THE CALL OF ABRAHAM.

"NOW THE LORD HAD SAID UNTO ABRAM, GET THEE OUT OF THY COUNTRY, AND FROM THY KINDRED, AND FROM THY FATHER'S HOUSE, UNTO A LAND THAT I WILL SHOW THEE."—*Gen. xii. 1.*

"BY FAITH ABRAHAM, WHEN HE WAS CALLED TO GO OUT INTO A PLACE WHICH HE SHOULD AFTER RECEIVE FOR AN INHERITANCE, OBEYED; AND HE WENT OUT NOT KNOWING WHITHER HE WENT."—*Heb. xi. 8.*

IT is with no ordinary feeling that one stands at the source of some mighty river. Amid the quiet hills, far away from the bustle of men, we look with a kind of wonder on the tiny streamlet which a child might cross, and it is not without an effort that we can realise that this is the beginning of that mighty current which in its onward course is to determine the rise of wealthy cities, and bear on its broad tide the commerce of half a nation.

It is with a similar feeling that we read the words of our text. For here we stand by the source of one of the mightiest currents of the history of the world. No nation has exerted so mighty and enduring an influence as the nation of Israel. Our religion, and with it much of our civilisation, comes from them; and as Christ Himself said, "Salvation is of the Jews." And yet but for the incident referred to in the text that nation would have had no existence.

Rightly did the children of Israel speak of Abraham as the father and founder of their race. It was not merely that he was their ancestor: for that they owed no special gratitude to him. It was that he, by his migration from the distant East, separated them from the idolatry and ignorance of the nations beyond the Euphrates, and so determined in great measure their future destiny.

As we look back from the clear light of our present standpoint, we can see how large a place Providence had

assigned to the Jews in the education of the world. In the nation which was to descend from Abraham "all families of the earth were to be blessed." The New Testament enshrines the one pure religion which is destined to mould into goodness the whole future of man. And yet in a sense the New Testament came out of the Old, and the Old Testament is simply the outcome of the best part of the life of the descendants of Abraham. Humanly speaking, then, it may be said that we would have had no Old Testament and no New Testament, we would have had no Jewish Church and no Christian Church, but for that decisive act of Abraham by which, leaving his father's country and home, he led the way to the Promised Land, and laid the foundations of the chosen race.

Historians are fond of showing us on what small events the great currents of history turn; they show us how the decision of a single battle saved Europe from being a mere dependency on Asia, again prevented Christendom from being made Mahommedan, and again saved the liberties of modern Europe from being riveted anew by the old despotisms. And similarly we may point to this wayfarer as he sets out from his far eastern home, and with no irreverence we may say that he carries with him the fortunes alike of the Jewish nation and the Christian Church, for in that journey of his we see the beginning of both.

But it is not to excite a passing wonder at the large issues which hang on seemingly trifling events that I have placed this text before you; it is that we may learn to exercise in daily life that spirit which prompted this decisive act of the great patriarch. For the writer to the Hebrews sees in this event, which laid the foundation of their nation, no mere accidental impulse; and as little does he view Abraham as a mere passive instrument in the hands of an unseen Providence. Rather does he see in it an illustration of that principle which, in common with every New Testament writer, he believed to be the spring of all true religious life, for it was "by faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after

receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

Were an artist to seek to paint an historical picture symbolical of Faith, I do not know that anywhere in the whole range of history, sacred or profane, he would find a finer or more suggestive subject than this. There in the foreground stands the Eastern chief, a man no longer young. Behind him lies the rocky citadel, Ur of the Chaldees, where he has hitherto dwelt with his kindred. Around him spreads the vast Mesopotamian plain. Before him rolls the great river, the Euphrates, which, when once he passes over, he will never more re-cross. Yet there is no hesitation or fear in his look, though he is leaving all he knows and loves for a far-off and unknown land. He feels that he is called of God, that God is the Guide of all his life, and he faces that unknown future in the calm strength of faith. The greatness of this act we see when we regard it as an instance of obedience—when called, Abraham obeyed.

Tradition tells us that the kindred and family of Abraham were idolaters; and there is a beautiful story in the Koran which tells us how he himself rose to a purer faith. "When night overshadowed him he saw a star and said, "This is my God." But when it set he said, "I like not those that set." And when he saw the moon rising he said, "This is my God." But when the moon set he answered, "Verily, if my God direct me not in the right way I shall be as one of those who err." And when he saw the sun rising he said, "This is greater than the star or moon." But when the sun went down he said, "O, my people, I am clear of these things—I turn to Him who hath made the heaven and the earth." We may take this story for what it is worth, but it is certain that, however he may have gained it, there had come to Abraham the ennobling thought that there was a God in whose hands were all his ways, and to whose will he owed unhesitating obedience. And so, when this call came to him to leave his father's house and his native land, it found him ready.

In what manner this call came to Abraham, and how he

knew it to be a call from God, we are not told. A great commentator has even pointed out that there is a second account of it in Genesis, which would seem to place it on a purely natural basis—which simply tells us that “Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother’s son and all the substance that they had gathered and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan.” This would seem to ascribe the migration of Abraham to that impulse which seems to prompt nations and individuals to leave their old seats for “fresh fields and pastures new.” But even if it were so, do you think it was untrue in the historian to record, or a mistake in Abraham to believe, that this was a call from God? But it was just this which was the very essence of Abraham’s faith, that he felt that in his migration he was doing no self-willed act, but simply obeying the unseen leading of God. And this is what we, my brethren, must get to learn and believe with all our hearts, that we are not the disposers of our own destiny; that there is a God to whom we owe obedience—a Providence that “shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will.”

The events and circumstances of our lives we may view in a purely secular way, or we may regard them as arranged by Providence, as so many calls of God to which we owe obedience, just as we might describe this migration of Abraham as a purely natural occurrence or as a call of God. Now, which of these ways of looking on our life is the wiser, which the truer? There is a sense, perhaps, in which both are true. It is true that the leading events and circumstances of our lives are so far quite natural, in that we can trace the origin of them, and see that they have occurred in accordance with the natural course of things. But that should not prevent us from, it should rather only impel us to, belief in divine guidance which works through all natural events; for a law has neither meaning nor existence except as the expression of a personal law-giver. Either we must look on ourselves as the sport of chance in a world without a God, or we must look on the varied circumstances and events of our lives as so many calls from

Him. We all of us acknowledge the existence of duty—that the humblest and the greatest of us are alike every moment of our lives under this great power, which declares what we ought to do—that, as one of our greatest statesmen has said, “Duty is a power which rises with us in the morning and goes to rest with us at night, is as the shadow which cleaves to us go where we will, and leaves us only when we leave the light of life.” Not the most trivial act in daily life, not the most careless word we utter, not the most hidden thought or secret desire, but is under the scope of duty—it either ought or ought not to be done.

But what is duty to a religious man—nay, how can you justify it to reason at all—save as that which the poet called it, “The daughter of the voice of God?” Take God away from the world; let it be proclaimed to-morrow that religion is—what some of us in our guilty hearts would fain have it—a grand delusion; let men everywhere believe there is no God, and write, as they did in the mad frenzy of the French Revolution, above the gates of our cemeteries, “Death is an eternal sleep,” and it will be impossible for you to show why men should not lie, and cheat, and murder—why anyone should be pure, or forgiving, or loving. With the overthrow of religion all must perish; if there is no God, there is no such thing as duty. And so, my brethren, to you who believe in God there comes in every summons to duty a call as truly from Him as this call to Abraham. The smallest and most commonplace task in life—your every morning’s work, however trivial a routine it may seem—that is God’s call to you as certainly as if an angel spoke it. Surely this is enough to redeem even the most despondent of us from the feeling that we are of no use in the world. Does the soldier think his post unhonoured, however humble, who has been ordered to hold it by the general? And shall we think that life obscure or useless to which we have been called by none other than God? Does there stir in one of us the wish to emulate the great and good who have gone before us—would we save our life from meanness, and shame, and sin—would we be followers

of them who, through faith and patience, now inherit the promises? then, like every great saint in the Bible, we must be ever ready to obey the call of God; the motto of our life must be, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and with us "to hear must be to obey." And believing that duty is but a name for the command of God, we must live but to do it, and to covet no other epitaph than that which was written by his brother over the grave of one of the noblest of modern Englishmen, the man who died to save India for England, the great and good Sir Henry Lawrence, "Here lies one that tried to do his duty."

Yes, our laureate sings—

"Not once or twice in our rough island story
The path of duty was the way to glory;
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self, before his journey closes,
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, which outredden
All voluptuous garden roses.

"Not once or twice in our fair island story
The path of duty was the way to glory;
He that, ever following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Through the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevailed,
Shall find the toppling crags of duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table lands
To which our God Himself is moon and sun."

But, in the second place, this act of Abraham's, like every great example of faith, shows a spirit that lived not for the present but for the future. There is implied in the scripture story that the thing which Abraham was called to do was neither easy nor pleasant. It is true that the people of these early times did not lead the settled life that we do; but, on the other hand, they had hardly any communication between distant countries, and to go to a far-off land was almost like going to another world. And if they clung less

than we do to the sense of nationality and the love of their native land, they had a more intense feeling of kindredship, and with them the family embraced not one but many generations. Yet Abraham was to leave all this behind him—he was never again to greet his father and his brethren, nor to see their tents glisten on the rocky steep. He was to cross the great river, which, like all ancients, he must have regarded with a shuddering awe, and which was a far more effectual separation to him than Atlantic or Pacific is to us. Yet, whatever struggle there may have been, we read of no hesitation, still less of disobedience. The voice that called him was God's, and, whatever the sacrifice, that was enough for him.

But it may help us to realise the motive which doubtless sustained Abraham, and the deeply religious character of what seems a mere secular journey, if we bear in mind that the home and country Abraham was called to leave was at least largely the abode of idolatry.

We know very little of the religious life of the kindred and country of the patriarch, but from slight notices in Scripture and current tradition it seems that they were largely, if not altogether, idolatrous; and it was that the higher faith to which Abraham had attained might be preserved by his isolation in a strange land that he was required to leave his home, and thus he was the first in that long roll of heroes to whom the bitter trial has come of choosing between two of the dearest feelings of the human heart. Bitter, indeed, must be the experience and keen the struggle when one has to choose between leaving his native land, bidding an eternal adieu to every well-known scene, gazing for a last time on the winding river and encircling hills, leaving kindly neighbours and familiar streets, for a land where all is strange, the manner foreign, and the tongue unhomely—to choose between these and abjuring his faith and trust in God, forswearing what he believes to be His very truth, and embracing and owning a lie. Yet to the Christian soul there can be no choice; God must be before everything; "Truth, it will cry, though the heavens crush me

from following it; no lie, though a whole earthly paradise were the price of my apostasy." It was so that the Huguenots, to the number of some fifty thousand, left their fair France for our bleak shores rather than abjure their faith in God. It was so that, more than two hundred years ago, the little ship, the "May Flower," carried away from England two hundred of her noblest hearts, who loved her as only patriots can love their native land, and who never till the end of their life ceased to think with tenderness and speak with pathos of the green lanes of their fatherland. They faced unflinchingly the stormy ocean, the keen winter, the almost unbroken forest, the treacherous Indian, the hard settler's life, because they would not give up their faith in God; because that to them a call as divine as Abraham's had come, saying, as to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee."

To us, my brethren, such a call will probably never come; in all probability we will never be called to make such a sacrifice; but if we would live the life of faith we must have this spirit which impels us to sacrifice present comfort and ease at the call of God, which prompts us to live, not for the gratification of the passing moment, but for the eternal future, which leads us to crush even the dearest feeling of our heart when we must do so to keep our faith and purity unstained. There is not a soul in this congregation to whom there will not come in life, perhaps not once merely, but often, the call to leave some pleasure, perhaps even allowable pleasure, at the call of duty and God. We may be called to abandon some pleasant vice, to forego some alluring occupation, to face misconstruction, calumny, and scorn; we may be called to leave the familiar land of gaiety and pleasure for the dreary and unknown land of pain. Yet if we have any spark, I will not say of the spirit of Abraham or of the grace of faith, but even of common manhood in us, surely we will do this! For surely it is true what one of our greatest writers has said, that "it is not to taste sweet things, but to do noble and true things and vindicate him-

self under God's heaven as a God-made man, that the poorest son of Adam dimly longs. Show him the way of doing that, the dullest day-drudge kindles into a hero. They wrong man greatly who say he is to be seduced by ease; difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death, are the allurements that act on the heart of man. Kindle the inner life of him, you have a flame that burns up all lower considerations."

How dead, then, must he be to all nobleness, not to say of faith, how unworthy the name, not merely of Christian, but of man, who lives, aye as many even in our churches do, for selfishness and pleasure, whose life is never heightened and solemnized by a call from God, for the heart is so gross and the ears so dull, they never hear the voice of Heaven. As Christian men and women, we must never thus sink into living for the present, for when we do so we have lost our faith. The very essence of faith is that it never rests in the present, it is ever pressing on to what is before. It never asks "what present pleasure can I grasp," but "for what goodness can I prepare." Do not think that Abraham found, in the land to which he went, pleasures that more than compensated him for the fatherland he lost. Till the end of his life he was a wanderer, and the only land he possessed in the country promised as an inheritance was what even the poorest may claim—a grave. But it was the very essence of his religious life that he realised that he was a stranger and pilgrim here, and that his best inheritance was that city which has no earthly foundations, "whose builder is God." Would we have the spirit of Abraham, the grace of Christian faith, then we must live, not merely for a future, but for a future which shall never dawn on our present life, and which will never take the shape of earthly compensations. Our hope must be fixed on that eternal life which is with the saints of God; the goal of our endeavour, the supreme object of our desire, must be the life of perfect purity and unselfishness to which death only can introduce us. Thus and thus only shall we imitate the faith of Abraham.

I have only time to allude to one other aspect of this commanding example of faith, and it is one especially appropriate to us who are about to pass into another year: it is that here we see Abraham facing the unknown future with calmness and courage,—“he went out, not knowing whither he went.” You may say that there was nothing very wonderful in this; it is what every one of us have to do every day we live. There is not a morning we go forth that we may not encounter any accident, and ere the day be over fall a victim to sickness, to bereavement, or sorrow.

“For surely morning never wore to evening
But some heart did break.
O father, whoso'er thou be,
That pledgest now thy gallant son;
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.
O mother, praying God would save
Thy sailor, while thy head is bow'd;
His heavy-shotted hammock shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.”

This possibility of momentary calamity is indeed true for all, but we cannot claim credit for always facing it, for it is only at times we realise it. Now, he can have no credit for courage who does not know the danger he faces.

In one of the Peninsular battles an officer rode at the head of his regiment past the general and his staff with a cheek that was deadly pale. Some one commented on it to Wellington as an instance of evident cowardice. “It is quite the reverse,” said the great general, “he is the bravest man of all, for he knows his danger yet he faces it.” And this is the special merit of this act of Abraham's. He knew his danger; he realised how utterly uncertain the future was, for he went out not knowing whither he went; yet he had no fear, because he felt that he could not go where God would not be his guide and defence. It was so in the almost similar experience of a man far removed from the time of Abraham, the Scottish traveller, Mungo Park, the

first to penetrate the interior of Africa. "Whatever way I turned," he writes, "nothing appeared but danger and difficulty: I saw myself in the midst of a vast wilderness, in the depth of the rainy season, defenceless and alone, surrounded by savage animals and men still more savage. I was five hundred miles from the nearest European settlement. At this moment, painful as my reflections were, the extraordinary beauty of a small moss irresistibly caught my eye. I mention it to show from what trifling circumstances the mind will sometimes derive consolation; for though the whole plant was not larger than the top of one of my fingers, I could not contemplate the delicate conformation of its roots and leaves without admiration. Can that Being, thought I, who planted, watered, and brought to perfection in this obscure part of the world, a thing which appears of so small importance, look with unconcern upon the situation and sufferings of creatures formed after his own image? Surely not! I started up, and disregarding both hunger and fatigue, travelled forward, assured that relief was at hand; and I was not disappointed."

Let us have faith, my brethren, that spirit which we see in Abraham and in every saint of God, from the earliest on to the latest days, and not even when the future presses on us, in its darkest anxiety or terror, shall we fail or be dismayed. Our own or another's sickness, anxiety for those whom we love better than life, even the dark shadow of death summoning us into the great unknown land, these shall strike no fear into the soul that is filled with faith in God, which knows and trusts in the unfailing love of the Father in Heaven, which believes that on the very throne of the universe sits the Friend and Redeemer of all, the Lord Jesus Christ. Such souls have an atmosphere of peace around them amid the wildest earthly storm. "They have but to will, and round them, wherever they are, rises, as it were, an invisible temple; their hearts can kneel down there, and they have an audience of the great, the merciful, the untiring Counsellor and Consoler." God grant we may so live and so die in the rest of faith! Amen.

VIII.

EMMANUEL—A CHRISTMAS SERMON.

“They shall call his name Emmanuel, . . . God with us.”—*Matt. i. 23.*

THE birth of Jesus Christ, brethren, was at the time an almost unnoticed event.

If the heir to some mighty king is born in our day, we know how the intelligence will be flashed over land and sea till nearly the whole world is acquainted with the news. Even in the age in which Christ came, the birthdays of the Roman Emperor and his family were known and celebrated over the whole civilized world. But, just as Jesus said, the Kingdom of Heaven came without outward observation, so it was with His own coming. There was no parade of outward pomp; there was nothing in any way to attract the general notice, or to signalize even to a Jewish crowd the day of Jesus' birth.

In the land of Palestine—a very small and rather despised part of the great Roman Empire, in the little village of Bethlehem, nestling on the top of one of the Judean hills; in the rude shed where the cattle were fed and tended, a child was born from a poor peasant mother, who had travelled that week eighty miles from her village home at Nazareth; and this is all, from the earthly outward side—this is all as the world then knew it, that marked the birth of Christ. On the morrow after that first Christmas, the great world awoke to its cares and duties and pleasures, unconscious of the slightest difference—the tide of human care and woe, of human pleasure and pain, rolled on, as if not the smallest incident had occurred to affect its mighty stream. And yet, however strange it seem to us, this silent unnoticed entrance of Christ into human life was the only fitting advent he could make. It could not have been otherwise, for he came to lead a life that should be a perfect

example to all men, and it could not be such if it did not partake of that obscurity which is the lot of the great majority. He came also to appeal to the chosen nation, and through them to the world, not from the stand-point of authority and power, but from that of godlike innocence and sweet attractive grace, and outward show would have hindered, not helped, His purpose. His great life-work of redemption and sacrifice made it necessary that Christ should not only be a man, but a poor and even despised man, and that poverty and obscurity had to begin even at his cradle. But need I tell you, brethren, that that was only one aspect of the coming of Christ? To the eye of sense and to the great world this was the common event of a common day—an incident unknown, or if known, unnoticed; but to the eye of faith, to the privileged few whom God admitted, as if for a moment, to an insight into His mighty purpose, this was the event for which all ages had been waiting.

Yonder, on the grassy slopes, the shepherds' eyes are flooded with more than earthly radiance, while other than earthly voices raise the first and only song the Heaven has taught the earth; yonder in the desert steeps, the eastern sages are pursuing their long and toilsome journey, just that they may visit this wondrous and royal child; and yonder in the courts of the Temple, gleaming bright there on the sacred hill of Jerusalem, two aged servants of God wait, whose lips shall soon speak in inspired song, while they hail this new-born child as the consolation of Israel and the desire of all the nations. And, brethren, faith was right, as it ever is, and sense and sight were wrong, or rather simply blind, as they always are. The birth of Jesus was the one great, supreme event in the world's long and troubled history.

At this very time, in this very week, from hundreds of millions of men from over a fourth of the widespread human race, in almost every corner of the globe, but chiefly in the great centres of civilization and power, the voice of praise and thanks shall be ascending to God, and countless hearts shall be rejoicing just over this very event—the

birth of Christ. Nay, even in this age of doubt, when all things are questioned, the very sceptic joins thus far in the Christmas hymn, and readily assents as to an indisputable historical fact that the coming of Christ was the greatest, as it has been the most beneficial, of the events of time. Can we wonder then that when Christian hearts turn back to the birth of Jesus, they should look upon it, not as it really happened in all its poverty of outward circumstance, but as the eye, not only of faith, but even of history, sees it? And so, when the Evangelists wrote their inspired record of the life of Jesus they see in His birth the fulfilment of the grandest promises given to the nation ages before; and St. Matthew, the first of these, sees in it especially the accomplishment of the glorious promise uttered by the greatest of the prophets seven centuries before, "They shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us." We need not stay here to enquire into the original meaning and scope of this prophecy. It doubtless had a message, as almost every prophetic message had, to the events of the prophet's own day, and may have been applied to quite another child than Christ, one of whose life we know nothing at all. Probably it was meant at the time as an encouragement to the nation of Israel when threatened with an alarming invasion, by reminding them, in this significant name, that as God had been with them in their past history so He would not fail them now; that their confident watchword in battle and trouble could still be "God with us." But, brethren, whatever the original use of these words, there can be no doubt as to their meaning in Christian times; nor has the Church ever deviated from her faith that in the fullest and highest sense they were only fulfilled when Christ was born; and at this Christmas time, when all branches of the Church unite in turning their thoughts especially to the coming of the Saviour, and when our own Church, in place of condemning, rather encourages the remembrance and commemoration of what no Christian heart should ever forget, I do not know what better subject we could have for meditation than this, that in Christ's

coming we have the fulfilment of the splendid prophecy, "They shall call His name Emmanuel, God with us;" and I shall try to show you how truly and fully the old promise was kept by speaking briefly of these three points in the coming of Christ:—(1) Its certainty; (2) Its character; (3) Its continuance; or in other words, by leading you to see how Christ has made God the truth, the love, and the life of our heart—made us realize His reality, His kindness, His nearness as we never could have done but for Him.

I. The certainty of Christ's coming, or how He has made God real to us.

I need hardly say, brethren, that when the Evangelist sees in Christ's coming the fulfilment of the prophecy "God with us," that is (as I believe) God with the whole human race, he could never have meant that God had ever been absent from man; nor that when I say Christ's coming made God real to us, I do not mean that God was ever unreal in the sense of non-existent. There is one truth we must hold as the most certain and fundamental of all, for without this

"The pillared firmament is rottenness
And earth's base built on stubble,"

and all life and thought a hopeless chaos—that there is not an atom of matter nor a moment of time which is not full of God, that "in Him," as the great apostle says, "we live and move and have our being." Ay, even wicked men, even the dark 'ages of history, even we when our lives may be evil and vicious, cannot be sundered from Him. God is with us always, everywhere. As well ask a speck of dust to rise and carry itself somewhere where it will not be part of this boundless universe, and acted on by its mighty and ceaseless laws, as to dream that any human soul can ever be where God is not with it. To escape from our own shadow, to silence our own thought, to cut ourselves asunder from our own past—these are easy compared with the attempt to no longer have "God with us." How then can this be a mark of Christ's coming which is inevitable in human

life? Let me try to make it clear to you by a single illustration. You know modern science has taught us that there is a power diffused throughout our world which we call electricity. It is present everywhere, even in our own bodies; it sleeps in the dew-drop as well as in the thunder-cloud. Now you know this power must have been always present in the world; the constitution of the universe and the life of man would have been impossible without it. Yet it is only within almost living memory that men have begun to know this marvellous power, and see the difference this knowledge has already made; look at the inventions which have almost revolutionized human life—the telegraph, the telephone, a thousand contrivances which have become an important part of our very existence. Now here you see, brethren, the difference between a power everywhere diffused and always acting, yet almost or altogether unknown, and the same power, in no degree altered, yet known and used. And this is the illustration of the difference between “God with us” since man’s creation, and “God with us” through Christ’s coming; or, as I have otherwise put it, it is Christ’s coming which has made God real to us; here is the grand certainty on which we can rest.

There were and are other ways of knowing God. The heathen religions, amid their idolatry and cruelty, were a-groping after God; the Jewish religion, in its inspired men and great events, revealed Him; all good and noble men have brought Him near; the world speaks of Him; our own heart and conscience confess Him. But, oh brethren, how dim, uncertain, unsatisfying are all these compared with Christ! Here in a human life as real as our own; here in a man with like passions to ourselves; here in one who filled every stage of human existence from helpless babyhood to strong manhood; here in one who toiled and rested, smiled and wept, rejoiced and sorrowed, lived and died as any of us; here in one whose history we know, can see amid all the vicissitudes of his course, amid friends and foes, in success and failure, can follow from point to point, almost

from day to day, of His life; here, brethren, is God. And does not this make God real to us; do we not feel that we know Him now as we never could do before; in this have we not a certainty as fixed as our own existence; is not this Emmanuel "God with us?" Yes, well may our modern poet sing,

"And so the word was flesh and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds.
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all heroic thought,
Which he may read who binds the sheaf,
Who builds the house, or digs the grave."

Christ's coming has made God the very truth of our life. God is no longer a dim dream, a difficult thought only the wise can grasp; He is the centre of all history, visible and plain in every action of Christ; He is the great reality.

Consider II.—The character of Christ's coming, or how He has made God's kindness clear.

The life of Christ revealed God, made God real to us, made God be with us, as nothing else had ever done; this has been our first point. But our second is at least as important. In what aspect did Christ reveal God? His coming was the coming of God; He was "God manifest in the flesh;" what, then, was the character of His coming? There are three ways in which you may study the life of Christ to obtain the answer to this. Every aspect of Christ's life reveals God; you must therefore look at these three points of view which exhaust it all. Consider these three things then which sum up the whole life of Jesus; His circumstances, His words, His actions. Now, all these three are in wonderful and beautiful harmony, they make one and the same impression upon us. Think of the circumstances of Jesus' life. We don't usually read men's character from their circumstances, for in great part these are beyond their control, but Jesus voluntarily chose His. Recall these to your remembrance, His helpless babyhood, His sweet childhood, His obedient and obscure youth, His

manhood of poverty and toil, His death of suffering and shame. Recollect His words, all of them tender, compassionate, merciful, unless to those whom it would have been the worst unkindness not to have aroused by stern rebuke. Think on the parable of the Prodigal Son, the "Come unto me all ye that labour," the beatitudes, the oft repeated "thy sins are forgiven, go in peace." Lastly, remember the actions of Jesus; His miracles, not one of which but was of mercy and healing; His dealings with the outcast; His love for His disciples; His tenderness with children; His forgiveness even of His murderers; and what, let one ask, is the one impression which all these views of this wondrous life make upon us? Is it not that of a love that seemed boundless, a tenderness whose healing touch reached the most hidden feeling, a sympathy which at once flew to help the humblest soul within its reach? And this, brethren, was the life of God; It was a man's life or it would not have been real to us; it was God's life or it would not have been a revelation; yet double though the life was it had but one character, and the character it unfolded to us was the character of God. Verily "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ; God so loved the world that He sent His Son;" God is Love. Here "God is with us" as He never was before; Christ's coming has made Him the very love of our life, which we must receive or be for ever dead to our true existence; and the conclusion of all hearts is in the words of the modern singer—

"So the All-great is the All-loving too,
 So from the thunder comes a human voice,
 Saying, "Oh heart I made a heart beats here,
 Face my hands fashioned see it in myself,
 Thou hast no power nor can'st conceive of mine,
 But love I gave thee with Myself to love,
 And thou must love me who has died for thee."

Consider lastly, III.—The continuance of Christ's coming, or how He has made us realise the nearness of God.

There is one thing in which the life of Christ is different from every other life; it has not passed away. And yet I feel as if I must immediately recall these words, and say that here too Christ is like all other men. For in so far as we live truly our life never passes away. In the circle of men whom we touch by our life, we live on indestructible by time or death. Moral influence cannot be destroyed, it ceases only when its range is completed. The patriot, the poet, the artist, the philanthropist, live often their truest life after they are laid in the grave. Often a man begins really to live only when he dies. But beyond all others this was true of Christ; but only because His life was beyond all. The parting promise of Christ was "Lo I am with you always to the end of the world." This does not only mean He would be a presence and influence always near us. It reaches even to the human life He lived here on earth, so that it never passes away. Let me try to show you what I mean by an illustration. You have a friend whom you have honoured and loved for years. You know the tone of his voice, the light of his eye, the smile of his face. These form part of his very self to you, and without these he could not be to you what he is. Yet these are all part of his material body, which, as a material thing, has changed many times since you knew him, nay, is constantly changing. But what keeps these always the same is the spirit, the life within, and that is why in the life beyond death, I believe with the greatest writers on this subject, we shall not have the smallest difficulty in recognising and knowing each one of those whom we have loved and known here, because, however, the bodily appearance be spiritualized and changed, the soul being the same will give to it the same easily recognisable expression. Now, brethren, it is so that the life of Christ, the human earthly life by which we know Him, never passes away. The spirit of Christ—Christ Himself—still lives, and that makes ever fresh and present to every Christian heart the life He lived on earth. This is the reason, I believe, why the gospel is simply a record of Christ's earthly life. For to the faithful

soul that is not an old history, something past and done; it is a present reality, something which cannot pass away. This is the deep meaning which lies in the celebration of Christmas, in the desire to bring before us, in Church commemorations, the great events in the life of our Lord. It is a true and proper desire; for remember, that to God there is no past; all is one eternal now, and to us, in so far as we are spirits made in God's likeness, it is even the same. Thus, brethren, the earthly life of Jesus makes God ever present, ever near. When I think of God I think of Him, and ought to think of Him, in and through Christ; and when I think of Christ I should think of Him as if I had bent over His cradle with the shepherds, or listened to Him with the disciples, or seen Him with the woman after He had conquered death and risen from the tomb. Thus Christ's life is to us something that never passes away; through His constant nearness we must feel God ever near; He is to all the countless generations of men "Emmanuel, God with us." Brethren, let this thought dwell in your hearts at once as a testing power and a glad promise. "God is with us," Christ has made Him the truth, and the love, and the life of our existence. But only in the pure heart and loving soul can God truly dwell. Try, therefore, to make yourselves, each one, "The Temple of God." And so the joy of Christ's Coming will be always yours. "God will be with you"—in temptation to deliver, in doubt to convince, in sorrow to comfort, in sickness to tranquilize, in death to make you live for ever. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

IX.

THE IDEAL OF A YOUNG MAN'S LIFE AND
HOW IT MAY BE SERVED BY RELIGIOUS
ASSOCIATION.

*A sermon introductory to the Young Men's Guild,
Bellahouston.*

“IF THOU WOULDST BE PERFECT.”—*St. Matt. xix. 21.*

“BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN
HEAVEN IS PERFECT.”—*St. Matt. v. 48.*

IT has been well said by our greatest English author of these days, “The situation that has not its ideal has never been filled by man.” That is, as I take it, however commonplace and even menial the life and outward calling of anyone may be, and however ordinary be his own talents, it is yet possible for him so to live out his life that it may rise into the very loftiest heights of moral grandeur and worth.

But to-night I have to speak to you of one life and situation which it is impossible not to feel has this end open to it. The life of a young man—even in the most prosaic and unbelieving time—must have its ideal; for that very season of life is itself ideal; even in the dullest soul fancy and imagination are there alive; youth has its dreams as inevitably as age has its cares; and that is the reason why a late statesman was wont to say, “Youth is genius.” But can it be said that there is any general agreement as to the kind of life which this period admires—is there such a general consent in youth that we can reduce all to the one type and speak of the one ideal commanding all; is it not the case that men differ as much in their ideas and desires at this as at any later period in life, and that all that

is really common to them is a kind of vague restlessness and yet unsatisfied ambition? I believe it is true that there is one ideal which in his inmost soul every young man loves—that there is one life which, if he could only see it constantly, he would follow unwaveringly—that there is one goal which all that is best in him pants to reach and touch. For it is the fundamental idea in all religion, one such common feeling and desire, that there is something which, if they could only see it, the soul of each one would leap up to in answering obedience and say—

“ Master, lead on and I will follow Thee
To the last gasp with love and loyalty.”

It is this great truth which the greatest of the fathers set forth in the well-known words, “O God, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our souls are restless till they rest in Thee;” and which another gave expression to when he said, “Men are made for righteousness even as the trees of the forest are for light.” But in youth this ideal is more commanding, because men are more open to receive it. The power of the world has not yet made us materializing and commonplace in our estimate of all things. As Wordsworth says in his greatest poem:—

“ The youth who daily from the East
Must travel, still is Nature’s priest,
And by the vision splended
Is on his way attended.”

And another great poet of our own day has drawn the picture of this splendid vision that floats before the eyes of youth—this ideal which is still the hoped-for life in the heart of every young man. He speaks of his youth as a time

“ When I heard the days before me, and the tumult of my life,
Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would
yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father’s field,

And at night, along the dusky highway, near and nearer drawn,
 Sees in heaven the lights of London flaming like a dreary dawn;
 And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him there,
 Underneath the lights he looks at, in among the throngs of
 men:

Men, my brethren, men the workers, ever reaping something
 new;

That which they have done but the earnest of the things that
 they shall do;

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
 Saw the vision of the world and all the wonders that would be;
 Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
 Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;
 Heard afar the world wide whisper of the south winds rushing
 warm,

With the standards of the peoples plunging though the thunder-
 storm,

Till the war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags are
 furled

In the parliament of man, the federation of the world;
 There the common-sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in
 awe,

And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law."

And in still nobler and higher strain he makes another sing
 of his youthful days—

"When, wide in soul and bold of tongue,
 Among the tents I paused and sung,
 The distant battle flashed and rung.

"I sang the joyful pæan clear,
 And sitting burnished without fear,
 The brand, the buckler, and the spear."

He speaks of youth, in all the ardour of its high and gener-
 ous enthusiasm—

"Waiting to strive a happy strife,
 To war with falsehood to the knife,
 And not to lose the good of life;

“To search through all I felt or saw—
The springs of life the depths of awe—
And reach the law within the law ;

“ At least not rotting like a weed,
But having sown some generous seed
Fruitful of further thought and deed.

“To pass, when life her light withdraws,
Not void of righteous self-applause,
Nor in a merely selfish cause—

“In some good cause, not in mine own.
To perish wept for, honoured, known,
And like a warrior overthrown,

“Whose eyes are dim with glorious tears
When, soiled with noble dust, he hears
His country's war song thrill his ears ;

“Then, dying of a mortal stroke,
What time the foeman's line is broke,
And all the war is rolled in smoke.”

But it may perhaps be said these are the idle and unsubstantial fancies of verse, utterly unpracticable and away from the world of real life ; and that they are alien to, and unauthorized by, religion.

Now, I would not quote these lines as I do if I did not believe that the highest poetry of an age is always its highest voice, and where it is true to its mission, it must speak as this does the truest wisdom and the surest faith.

But, brethren, I do wish in this as in all things to appeal to the authority of Christ, and by His words all I have already spoken is more than confirmed. Once there came to Christ a candidate for discipleship on whom He looked with no ordinary favour. He was in all the glow and attractiveness of youth—a youth ardent with generous enthusiasms and noble ambitions. He could answer proudly when the great moral commandments are named to him,

"All these have I kept from my youth up." But his soul was still unsatisfied, and he yearned for nobler attainments still; and though the further task imposed upon him proved, at this time at least, too much for him, and he turned in sorrow away, making what Dante calls "the great refusal," yet Christ recognised the truth of his aspiration and set forth the expediency and measure of his ideal when he said, "If thou wouldst be perfect;" just as at a former time He had laid this down as imperative for all, in words that are perhaps to be read as both a command and a promise, "Be ye therefore perfect, or ye shall be perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." This, then, on the highest of all authority, is the ideal of all men, but specially commended to young men. It is perfection—it is the very highest moral aspiration—it is the wish to exclude if possible the sense of failure from every part and aspect of our life—it is the idea, which the very word itself in the original expresses, that life had reached its divinely-appointed end—that our whole being is now in gracious harmony, and that our existence has become a kind of noble music, in which the discords are all passed away or only go to swell the splendour of the general song. I may perhaps be told that this is one of those dreams which youth may cherish but wiser manhood ridicules. But, brethren, the authority on which I found my statement is at least to all Christian men supreme, and without appeal; and yet, even if we look to all that is wisest and best in mere secular teaching, even if we take the voice of the great writers of all ages, we are shut up to the same conclusion. Ask Plato, the wisest of the Greeks, and is not the burden of his whole teaching just this, that man must live not for the world of sense and appearance but for that ideal goodness and virtue which makes him independent of all accident and misfortune. And the wisest of Roman moralists and teachers, the noblest of stoic philosophers, all agree in preaching this. The vision of Dante, the greatest poem of Italy and perhaps of the world, teaches the same truth, which his life even more eloquently taught, that the man who lives for

anything but a high and noble ideal is preparing for himself a future Hell or Purgatory, and the words addressed to the poet in the shades below give the moral of it all.

“ If thou, he answered, follow but thy star,
Thou can’st not miss at last a glorious haven.”

We might speak of how constantly the same truth is enforced by the greatest writers in our own literature, by Shakespeare, for example, whose young men almost without exception are all cast in the same mould of lofty aspiration, and who makes his Hotspur say—

“ Methinks it were an easy leap
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon;
Or drive into the bottom of the deep,
Where fathom line could never touch the ground,
And pluck up drowned honour by the locks.”

Milton, perhaps the noblest and purest of our great names, not only sets before us in his poetry this same life for the ideal, “Living as ever in our great taskmaster’s eye,” as he himself highly resolved when a young man of twenty-three; but he nobly says that he who would write a poem must first make his own life a true poem; that every young man, without the vain ceremonies of knighthood, should yet feel himself vowed and consecrated as a knight of God to all that is chivalrous and pure.

I might multiply quotations and authorities without end, for there is no great writer who does not set forth the necessity of an ideal and lofty aim in youth; but I simply ask you to test these examples for yourselves, and to see if this be not the teaching of those whom we unite in revering as the greatest and wisest of all time—

“ The dead but sceptred heroes that still rule
Our spirits from their urns.”

With one voice they impress on us the indispensable necessity of a noble purpose in youth, of a high and pure ideal in the life of every young man; and therein is unitedly the

message which one of the latest of their number has thus given expression to—

“So live that, when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of Death,
Thou go, not like a galley-slave at night
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy tomb
Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch
Around him and lies down to pleasant dreams.”

Now, this ideal life, this perfection after which we are to aim, may be summed up in three things—the desire for knowledge, the desire for goodness, the desire for usefulness.

No young man who has a spark of manhood in him desires to be a fool, or a sot, or a sluggard; but very often the fear of ridicule, the want of a steady purpose, and not least the lack of the contagion of lofty example and the support of noble companionship, resign him to that dreary compromise, that half-way house to all these, that compound of them all—the mere man of the world.

Young men, that is not your life. God has called you to quite other work than this. Surely it was not for this end your manhood was given ;

“Not for this,
Was common clay ta'en from the common earth
Moulded by God and tempered by the tears
Of angels to the perfect shape of man.”

Not for this did Christ call and urge you to be perfect ; not for this were you signed in your baptism for His servants and soldiers till your life's end. If you resign yourselves to that lower end, if you will not cherish your ideal and strive to live up to it, if you admit any compromise with baseness and resign yourselves to evil, then every noble life will reproach you: you will not be able to lift even a great book but it will condemn you ; those names your country glories

in will be your shame ; but worse still, your Christian faith will become a ghastly unreality—that immortal jewel which Christ died to save you will have thrown away as 'twere a careless trifle ; you will have

“ Thrust to endless shade
What was so gloriously made.”

There are many ways in which you may be supported and helped in your endeavour ever to keep before you this ideal life, what St. Paul calls “ your high calling.” I would not have you to forget any of these ; I would not have you undervalue or disparage one of them. Above all, it is Christ who Himself must really do all for you ; He is to you, as to all men, the Author and Finisher of your faith. But I speak to-night of the special service you may derive from religious association among yourselves. I would be most ungrateful to stand here and not to record how much I have myself owed to this principle. To no society or organization, not to college—hardly, even, to the Christian Church itself—do I owe more than to this. I do not speak this in any egotism, for my experience has, I know, been shared by many, but in order to give to what I say the weight and emphasis of personal testimony. And it is not so much what any individual society does or has done ; it may be easy to criticise and find faults with any of them, and there may be aspects from which they may be made to appear commonplace or even ridiculous ; but take them even at their weakest, and is it not almost an immeasurable encouragement and stimulus to nobility of life to feel “ Here is a society of young men, gathered together for religious improvement, vowed to seek after an earnest life, aiding each other in the endeavour to acquire knowledge, and unitedly seeking to accomplish some good work for the service of others.” I confess it seems to me impossible to conceive a society with a nobler aim. It is indeed almost literally the aim of the Christian Church itself ; and it is very largely the aim which Universities and other noble institutions have set before them.

And now at last this movement has been taken up by our own Church. She has rightly and wisely said, "We see the incalculable good which comes from the religious association of young men, and we now wish to make that part of our Church organization, and to have in every parish a meeting of the young men, and thus to obtain all over the Church the union of our youth as it were in one great army—the Young Men's Guild." In the few years which this movement has had it already numbers over 300 branches, and more than 10,000 members. I cannot believe that our parish alone will make no response. I cannot believe that among young men, many of them with greater leisure and more opportunities than falls to the lot of most, few or none would be found to join in a movement which appeals to all that is noblest and most generous in youth. As your minister at least I feel I should be false and recreant to my duty if I failed to urge you to this. Believe me, there are few things that will so aid you to live that ideal life after which every generous youth longs, and to which every Christian young man is so solemnly vowed. While I speak there comes irresistibly into my mind the memory of many whom I have known in such an association as this, now scattered to all parts almost of the world, and some who have passed

" To where beyond these voices
There is peace."

And in hardly a single case have I known the influence to fail; of very many in my own personal knowledge I can say that it imparted to them a zeal for knowledge, quickened the desire for information, led to that loving intimacy with our great writers which is one of the most lasting as it is one of the most elevating of all our pleasures. It led to a real moral earnestness, made religion a ruling power in the life; diffused the glow of a humble yet most real piety, gave character of genuine and informed yet unostentatious Christianity to the whole man. And while it thus sweetened and ennobled the whole tone and temper of life, it made it

impossible for them to think only of themselves and not to go forth in loving service to the needs of others. I urge upon you the benefit you may derive for your own life—the quickening of your intellectual, your moral, your religious existence by means of such an association. I speak from personal experience of the stimulus you will gain for study, and the lasting and noble friendships you may form. But I would not have you to consider these the only or even the chief inducements; all that is best in you refuses to be roused by merely selfish appeals; nay, God Himself does not call you to save your own soul except as you desire, and are willing also to take your part in saving the souls of others. It is for this reason I appeal to you. The Church needs her young men; the world even, the nation you glory in and love, makes the same appeal.

When in the Old Testament the Jewish nation and Church were sunk in general apathy and disorder, Samuel instituted the Schools of the Prophets, which were largely associations of young men, and to them may we trace the spiritual life that never henceforth faded; and in the early Christian Church we read of the young men as forming, according to more than one great scholar, a Society or Guild. We need the same help now, for it is true, in one aspect at least, what a late brilliant statesman has said that “almost everything great has been done by youth.” Remember what he has also said, “The youth of a nation are the trustees of posterity.” Think on the great heritage you have received in your Church and your nation, and be true to both. Take to heart the words of our living historian when speaking of men like Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Humphrey Gilbert, among the noblest and bravest of Englishmen—forgotten worthies, he says—“Life with them was no summer holiday, but a holy sacrifice offered up to duty, and what the Master sent was welcome.” Imitate those who have made this little land forever famous and beloved—imitate them by cherishing a lofty ideal—imitate them by loyal devotion to your Divine Master Christ, who is Himself your Ideal.

God grant that all of us, but especially you, my young brethren, may be followers of the saintly and noble, and as a band of brothers may you take your share of hardness and suffering as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Never may you have to speak of your lost ideal this sad confession which a living poet makes a dying man express:—

“ God bends from out the deep and says,—
 I gave thee the great gift of life;
 Wast thou not called in many ways?
 Were not my earth and heaven at strife?
 I gave thee of my seed to sow;
 Bringest thou me my hundred-fold?
 Can I look up with face aglow
 And answer—‘ Father, here is gold.’

“ Mine held them once, but flung away
 Those keys that might have open set
 The golden sluices of the day,
 I clutch the keys of darkness yet ;—
 I hear the reapers singing go
 Into God’s harvest; I that might
 With them have chosen, here below
 Grope shuddering at the gate of night.

“ O glorious Youth, that once was mine !
 O high ideal ! all in vain
 Ye enter at the ruined shrine
 Whence worship ne’er shall rise again;
 The bat, the owl inhabit here,
 The snake rests in the altar stone,
 The sacred vessels moulder near,
 The image of the God is gone.”

X.

GOD'S UNREALIZED PRESENCE.

"SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE, AND I KNEW IT NOT."—*Gen. xxviii. 16.*

I DO not mean to say anything to-day, brethren, on that wondrous vision which God vouchsafed to Jacob, or on the important bearing it had upon the Patriarch's life. I wish rather to take these words which burst from his lips when the vision had died away and he awoke, and to show what lessons they carry for the life of every one. For be assured of this, that one of the most necessary things for all of us in reading the Bible—and I would say it is a quite indispensable requisite in those whose office it is to teach the Scriptures—is to be able to see how, without distorting or straining the narrative of their lives, we are able to bring home to ourselves with instructive effect the experiences of even the most ancient saints. I know that the best qualification for this is that spirit of genuine piety, of humble receptiveness, which may be the property of the very poorest, and which, no matter how humble our attainments be, will be assuredly granted to any of us who diligently and prayerfully seek it. But there are two considerations that, even to the most sceptical, should completely justify this application of ancient words—it is the acknowledged fact that we are here dealing with two things that know no change—the nature of man and the nature of God. Man has changed, it would seem, in almost every respect, even since the date of the latest book of the New Testament; but all the while his essential nature (and it is with that religion deals) is the same now as it was in the days of the earliest of the race; and we know, as the surest truth in reason and religion, that no change can possibly affect the being or character of God. It is because of these two great

facts that all Scripture is full of wisdom—"Profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The dull, the careless, or the unbelieving may sneer or cavil at the Old Testament especially, and wonder why we should be supposed to study the history of persons or the records of actions which are so far away from our own lives. And while there are doubtless other reasons, for the Bible serves many purposes, and while it is also well to bear in mind that not even in the Old Testament have we the accidental accounts of unimportant actors in God's great purpose in the world, for every view of inspiration implies their careful selection, yet surely it is a sufficient reply and a clear vindication of the value of the Scriptures to say that not even a light and trivial event is unimportant to anyone which shows him something of his own nature or instructs him as to that Mighty God in whom all of us alike "live and move and have our being."

So reading them there, brethren, there is one most important truth these words of Jacob specially remind us of, and that is, the unrealized presence of God. Jacob was a religious man, much in the same sense in which the word may be applied to every one in such a congregation as this. Possibly his religion was a real and earnest thing to him, it is almost certain that, with all his faults, it was in his heart and not merely on his lips, touching his conscience and not merely teaching his creed. Yet none the less he was far from a perfect man. Even judged by the standard of his own times he came short. He was far inferior to Abraham, whom, indeed, he never equalled in patient trust on God and noble generosity to man; he was inferior, probably, to his own father Isaac; inferior certainly to what he himself became in later years. He was almost fresh from the commission of a sin, which, with its true impartiality, the Bible records against him, showing us how he who afterwards became the "Israel," or "Prince of God," stained himself with lying, unbrotherliness, self-seeking, and fraud. Still Jacob was the son of religious parents, and like all of us here he had been instructed in the truths of religion. Un-

doubtedly the circle of such truths must have been far smaller then than now; one thing, however, he must have heard even from his childhood, just as we, too, have been taught it—it was the great and inspiring truth of the encompassing presence of God. That was something which we cannot but imagine the grandson of Abraham and the son of Isaac must often have had impressed on him. Yet what do we find? Jacob has left his home for possibly the first time in his life; he has performed the first stage in his long journey; he sinks in weariness to sleep, and God sends a vision to comfort his sad heart. And what are the first words that burst from him when he wakes? They are not merely inspired by the mingled awe and delight with which the vision filled him; they are not merely the irrepressible expressions which that wondrous sight demanded. No; there is in them a conscious touch of sorrow and repentance. They tell us that he accepted this wondrous grace which God had shown him as an encouragement and blessing, but also (what all God's blessings should be not less to us if our conscience were only tender to feel them so) as a reproof. Yes, he says (if we may be allowed to amplify his language), I now see what formerly I was blind to. I now remember what I should never have forgotten. Strange that I should have failed to realize what yet I have long known. I thought myself alone and friendless, helpless, and forsaken. I regretted bitterly that I was leaving every familiar face, and that henceforth all around me must be foreign and strange. O fool that I was, and slow of heart not to believe and remember that by the Mightiest and most Loving I was not and could not be forsaken; yes, "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not."

Brethren, have not all of us passed through the same experience? have not all of us had the same confession to make? Let any man look back on any long period of his life, or when he has come through some severe trial or great crisis, and if he have any spark of religious feeling in him, will not his deepest feeling be that God was with him there, and yet that he failed at the time to see Him or to notice

Him as clearly as he now recognises His presence? Engrossed by the pressure of outward trouble or sorrow, he has been wholly taken up with the earthly and human surroundings; and not till it has passed away and become part as it were of his vanished life does he recognize that Presence that was closer to him than all beside, and that Power which was really sustaining him in the struggle; and it is with a sense of what he has lost by not earlier seeing this that the same confession is forced from him, "Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." For surely it is a great loss to us that we do not sooner and more readily feel the encompassing presence of God—that this is so often unrealized till our trouble has left us calmer and more open to the great realities!

In all the deeper and more difficult experiences of life, of what simply priceless benefit it is to be armed with all the best advantages we can command. When any of those experiences come to us that are necessary and inevitable to every one—when we are laid low by sickness or encountered by strong temptation, when we are entering like Jacob on a new and untried life, or like him are made to feel utterly helpless and alone, when we are crushed by disappointment or beset by fear—what of all things is most necessary for us, what can bring to us the surest relief and minister the most effective strength and comfort? I do not underrate other advantages and aids. It is well for us if at such a time we are surrounded and cheered by the presence of kind friends, by the shelter of a peaceful home. Still better is it if we are spared the reproofs of a conscience avenging itself upon us for our former deafness to its warnings; if the chain of evil habit does not gall us and sting us with a sense of slavery to the lowest and worst instincts of our nature; if our memory does not again and again bring before us that which we would give the world to be able to undo. Oh blessed, thrice blessed, are they who have been so kept by God's good grace that in the darkness of an evil time they are not delivered over to the deeper darkness of an evil heart, and the consciousness of an evil life! But beyond all

these we need One surer and more effective Help ; One more prevailing Presence. After all, friends can go only a little way with us. "The world's a room of sickness where each heart knows its own anguish and unrest;" and however pure the life and sweet the memory, in the hour of trouble these are themselves disturbed and incapable of giving relief. There is in such a time only one thing which cannot change, which, all the brighter and calmer for surrounding darkness and storm, can give to the soul an instant and effective peace.

One great traveller tells us of an earthquake that visited a country he passed through: "Houses were falling, trees were moving, the very mountains were reeling, and when he went to the harbour the sea had fled and the ships were on dry ground. One thing alone was untroubled ; when he looked up to the sky it was calm and unmoved." So is it that in all the storms of our life the one feature that knows no disturbance is this grand truth of the encompassing presence of God. And as the Psalmist said, "Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. God is in the midst of us, we shall not be moved ; God shall help us, and that right early."

But how may this encompassing presence of God be made effective for our help ? May it not be said that, since this is a thing which does not depend on ourselves, it is quite beyond our control ? If God's presence really never goes from us, and is always encompassing us round, no effort of mine is required to bring it, just as no effort of mine could drive it away. Now, in one sense this is all true. That which God is in Himself He is apart from man's will ; and since He fills every part of His creation, He fills also the life of each man with a presence that can suffer no eclipse or withdrawal. It is well for us to settle in our own soul this surest conviction that God's nearness and presence depends not on our varying religious moods. We may be faithless or worldly, and have no thought of any existence, that is not visible and outward to the sense, but none the less is it true

of every spot where human feet have gone, "Surely the Lord was in this place though we knew it not." Man, as the old German so piously puts it, is the true *Shekinah* of God. Wherever there is a man, there is the visible and outward token of the unseen but all-encompassing Divine presence. But not the less must it be said that, as far as we are concerned, nay, as far as it truly is, there is another side to the picture. God, truly, is only where He is felt to be; to have to say, "The Lord was in this place, and I knew it not," is really to confess that, as far as you were concerned, God really was not there. The things that are in the outward world exist altogether apart from our seeing them, or having knowledge of them through our senses. The murmur of the sea, the music of birds, the odour of flowers, the sweet and varied colour and light of the landscape, these you do not think of as created by man, they are there, you say, independent of him. And yet to the deaf has music or sound an existence? does the blind man ever know what you mean by light or landscape? And so to the soul that has made itself blind and deaf to the presence of God, for it there is no such thing. The atheist may be right, for him there is no God: "He goes backward, but he cannot find Him, and forward, but He is not there." No flood of light can reach the brain where the nerve of sight is hopelessly diseased; the loudest sounds never startle to the lightest tremor the utterly deaf. If for us long tracts of life, great events in existence, have brought no sense of divine nearness and help, it has not been because God was not there, but simply because we knew Him not. God does sometimes rouse by a vision or startle by a dream those who, though they know Him, have awhile forgotten Him; but to those who wilfully shut Him out of their life, the inevitable judgment we see working in all things shall surely come; what they will not, ere long they shall find they cannot do; as they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, that knowledge will become for them impossible; the world for them will be emptied of God. God may be in their place of life, but they shall never know it; they will reach that

lost and dreariest state when impiety and despair become joint-tenants of the soul—"Without God and without hope in the world."

How, brethren, may we avoid this last and worst state—how may the presence of God be made real and constant to us? by what means shall we make the eye of the soul clear and undimmed, its ear quick and keen, to catch the encompassing of that Divine Being that, though so near, may yet for us be so far? Is not the answer clear? You live a varied life—you are a being of many parts; you live a great part of your life amid things and scenes that touch and move you through the senses. But you cannot meet with God there; He is not a stone that you may touch or a scene you may look on. And yet there are those to whom this outward life of sense is almost the whole of their existence, Take away from some men their senses and bodily appetites, and you would leave them almost absolutely nothing. A great philosopher of our day has told us that with very many the dress actually is the man; so with others it is the shop, the trade, the scene of dissipation. There is hardly the smallest residue of life of the man's being these do not absorb. The wonder is not—when we look at the character of our lives—that we find the thought of God's presence so difficult, but that we are able to reach it at all, for it is only in the religious life we can meet with God; it is the soul, not the sense, that sees Him; He speaks only in the still small voice which is audible alone to the ear of faith. Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door on the excitements and importunities of sense, pray to thy Father.

"Speak to Him, then, for He hears.

And spirit with spirit can meet—

Closer is He than breathing,

And nearer than hands and feet."

Strive to make thy life pure, for only the pure in heart see God. Love thy brother as thyself: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen. Meditate in the Divine Word of

Scripture; for in that quiet sacred spot, withdrawn from the world's din, the saints of every age have met their God. Make your own heart a temple, for God designed it for that, though we turn it into a robber's den, and you will always have a shrine in which to pray. Lastly, remember though you have a body you are a soul, and live in the latter, not the former, making it "a mansion for all lofty forms," not "a cage of evil beasts."

He who so lives, brethren, the life of prayer and sacred meditation, of purity and brotherhood, of inward peace and elevation above base desire, shall seldom or never have to confess, "The Lord was in this place and I knew it not." In the cool of the day, when the turmoil is over, the Lord may walk in the garden of his soul with a closer and dearer presence; but there shall be no barren wastes in his existence, no godless intervals in his life. For him even the Valley of the Shadow of Death shall have no darkness, for he shall have God's presence as the rod and staff of his journey, and whatever worlds and lives he passes through, always shall it be true of him that he shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

XI.

CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST.

“I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST ; AND IT IS NO LONGER I THAT LIVE BUT CHRIST THAT LIVETH IN ME ; AND THAT LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE IN FAITH, THE FAITH WHICH IS IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR ME.”—*Gal. ii. 20.*

THE Apostle Paul is perhaps the most important representative of Christianity, and as he certainly was the most prominent actor in the early Church, his writings form no inconsiderable part of the New Testament. He planted the greatest number of churches, and his history is recorded with a fulness of detail that is not given to any other, even among the Apostles. More than others his very personality seems lost in the cause which was everything to him, so that when we find him, as in the passage before us, giving vent to what seems a mere personal felling, we may be sure that his words have no mere individual reference. Never was there one so fitted to be the representative and exponent to others of Christian truth. His transparent candour, his courage, his zeal, his freedom from local prejudice and prepossession make us feel that when he speaks of himself, he does not speak merely for himself, but as the spokesman and representative of the Church or of the race. And thus it is in the passage before us. He has been showing historically, as he is afterwards to do doctrinally, the insufficiency of the law, and the impossibility to attain through it the higher life. And as he proceeds to show how that life is possible, the full tide of feeling rises in his soul and makes it impossible for him to speak abstractly, but bears him on to an exultant outburst of personal experience and conviction—“I have been, I now am, crucified with Christ. My life is so united to his that I look upon my former striving after mere legal righteousness as if it had been

killed when he was slain; and all mere personal desire and selfish longing I put away from me as part of the dead past. In truth, it seems as if it were no longer I that live; a higher and a holier one is living in me, and that is the Christ whose spirit is my inward law, as His life is my outward example. It is true, I must live as other men; I am subject to bodily conditions and appetites as they are. But, though I must yet live in the flesh, my truest and deepest life is in what I feel and do through that faith which makes me one with my dear Master and Lord, who now loves me, and who proved His love in the past by giving Himself up for me." But though we cannot help looking on these words as they were illustrated in the noble life of him who spoke them, they are evidently meant to apply to every Christian man, for they state the only way in which, whether for Paul or for any of us, the higher life can be reached. How shall we make that life ours? how shall we avoid that dreary sense of failure which takes away all the joy of living? by what rules are we to be guided in life? what aim are we to set before ourselves, and how are we best to pursue that aim? Consciously or unconsciously, are we not all putting these questions to ourselves—are we not all, every day we live, making experiments to discover the true solution of this problem? And yet we have not far to look for it. There can be but one true method of life, and that we are not free to choose or to refuse. As Christian men and women, we are already committed to it, dedicated and vowed to it in our Christian baptism. The rule of life for all of us is in the words "I am crucified with Christ."

Long ago, beneath the blue of Syrian skies, in the sacred land of Palestine, amid a society so different and yet so like our own, a life was lived whose influence was to draw to it all other lives. It was the life of God; for here we believe God, who is never far from any one of us, and who is the Father of our spirits, since He made us in His own likeness—here God, never far from man at any period of his history, drew still closer and Himself became man. And so all nature knew this Divine One, and waves were silent at His voice,

and disease and death fled affrighted before Him. And yet it was none the less the life of a true man. All human conditions he bowed to, all the limitations of our life limited Him. He lay in helpless infancy like any human babe: he grew up in stainless, yet natural innocence, a holy, yet real child; to the quiet obscurity, the simplicity, if not poverty of village life he submitted. And when his great work of public teaching was begun, his life was one long self-denial. Hunger and weariness pressed him, sorrow pierced His heart, failure saddened His life, and the life-long self-renunciation was closed by a death of agony amid jeering enemies and a sullen crowd. And that life, my brethren, is no old historic fact, it is an ever-present reality. Christ did not lie mouldering in that rock-hewn tomb! He is here now; He has been with the Church through her long history. The Church is not builded on Him as on some old tradition, but lives with His life, which is her inspiring breath. That life touches us more closely than any life can do; it is more than our example. To this life we turn as something which is near us, which, though we have not already attained to, is in a sense our own, "We are crucified with Christ;" never can we think of our lives apart from His; never can we dare to feel that we are free to make what we like of ourselves. These words do not mean that we are to practise outward austerities; that we are to forswear the sweet charities of home, to refuse the simple pleasures of life, and to practise a course of rigid asceticism. To him who uttered them they no doubt meant much of this. Paul's fidelity to Christ, his zeal in his great mission, the surrender of his whole soul to the Master he loved, compelled him to give up home and kindred, to be an outcast and a wanderer, to fill a Roman prison, to die by a Roman sword. But few are required to tread that hard pathway now, for such cruelties are, for the most part, no longer possible. And yet the self-surrender of Christ's followers should be none the less; the principle of the Christian life has not changed though the opportunities for its manifestation have altered.

There are two things now, as then, implied in this ideal crucifixion with their Master of all Christ's followers. There is implied, first of all, that every one takes the life of Christ as his pattern and ideal—seeks to make the spirit that breathed in the life of his Master the guiding principle of his own. The life of Christ reached its climax in His crucifixion, for we believe that great catastrophe to have been so far voluntary in that it was contemplated by our Lord from the first as a thing He would have to endure, and was submitted to by Him in order that through His cross He might reconcile us to God. Thus He who was the Son of the Highest, who shrank from no humiliation and suffering in his love for us, did not shrink from the last and worst bitterness of all, but met mortal agony and death's darkness on our behalf. But in the cross, looked at in another way, we see no exceptional act, but only the intensifying of what all through His life characterised Jesus. The rule of His life was to ever deny himself for others. The miraculous power He so freely exercised for them, giving through it food to the hungry, health to the sick, sight to the blind, and even life to the dead, he never once used on His own behalf, nor would he stoop to seek refuge through it from weariness and hunger, from sorrow and death. And even apart from this marvel of self-restraint, more wondrous than any miracle, how full of self-forgetting love was the life of Jesus! How patiently He bore with the dulness of His disciples; how thoughtfully he consulted for their welfare; and, though himself the holiest and the best, with what tender eagerness he welcomed the outcast and the sinful! Nor did the Church ever forget this crowning example of her Master. She placed charity as the highest and most indispensable of all virtues—she taught that a self-forgetful love was the fulfilling of the law; and not by precept only but by example also she sought to illustrate this principle of her Lord. The Apostles and first preachers of the Church chose a life of voluntary poverty, and in an age of the most callous selfishness, when those who were greatest in power and place ransacked sea

and land, violated every law of God and man to swell their selfish and criminal pleasures, the members of the Church showed such an enthusiasm and self-forgetting love as stirred even those torpid souls to tardy admiration, and provoked the wondering exclamation, "See how those Christians love one another!" Yes, as this same Apostle wrote "the love of Christ constrained them," so that no sacrifice was too great, no interest too dear, no terror too appalling for their devotion to others. And, my brethren, this must still be the law of the Christian life. Our crucifixion with Christ implies that for us too the supreme law must be not self-gratification but self-sacrifice. But our crucifixion with Christ implies something more than the taking of His life as our supreme example. This indeed would be all that would be possible were Christ no more than other great and good men; if, like them, all He bequeathed to the race were a historic example. But it is not so! Through the "grave and gateway of death," Christ departed only to return in a fuller presence; and not only is He with the Church, her invisible but supreme guide, but to every Christian soul he is more close and near than earthly adviser or friend—the light of all its seeing, the strength of all its life, the indwelling deity in the temple of the heart.

(2) And thus our crucifixion with Christ implies further, the surrender of our wills to his. At first sight nothing seems more reasonable, nothing more desirable, than that a man's own will should of itself shape his destiny, for we associate with the idea of restraint a sense alike of discomfort and injustice. But to have no higher law in life than our own will would not be happiness, but the most utter misery. It would be to stand at the mercy of every accident, to be the sport of every gust of passion, and so far from thereby realising the end of our existence, it would be the most certain way of missing it. In that state, so far from being free, we would be the slave of every outward circumstance. As a wise and loving child seldom thinks in what he does of gratifying his own selfish desires, but seems

prompted in all things by the unspoken wish that he reads in his father's face, so that his father's will, rather than his own, seems to rule him; as one waiting on an invalid learns to look for his orders by anticipation of the needs of the sick one, and never thinks of referring to his own will or desire; as a brave soldier on the battlefield seems to lose all consciousness of his own will and to find all his promptings to action in the commands of his leader, so, my brethren, ought it to be with us in our relation to Christ.

This presence of Christ, my brethren, we learn to recognise through faith. For here manifestly we cannot "walk by sight." With the eye of sense none of us have ever gazed on Christ, nor have words from Him ever fallen on our outward ears; and so perhaps at first it strikes us with a sense of unreality when we talk of his abiding presence. But the most real things are not those we look upon, nor are those most with us whom our eyes behold. Our friends are often nearer to us when distance or death has for ever taken them from our eyesight.

"No distance breaks the tie of love;
Brothers are brothers evermore."

And so it should not surprise us that it is He, who has never taken bodily shape to us, we should yet be asked to accept and obey as a presence more real and more abiding than any mortal could be. And this we can do through faith—through that inmost feeling in our nature which tells us that in Christ are solved all the contradictions and perplexities of our life, that His life as we read it in the gospels must be as true as it is divine, that His spirit, which has inspired all the nobility and holiness we know of, must be that too which has prompted our every holy thought or noble deed, that either He is, and is the Master and Guide of all, or else

"The pillar'd firmament is rottenness
And earth's base built on stubble."

Yes, my brethren, either this faith on the Son of God who loved us with a love so great that He gave Himself to

suffering and death for us, is true, or life is a perplexing and barren enigma. God is an unknown, perhaps impossible, existence, and death is a terrible leap into the dark of annihilation. But speaking, as I do, to a Christian congregation, I do not surely need to argue as if the truth of that faith were in question, into which you have all been baptized, which is entwined with your dearest duties to the living and your holiest remembrances of the dead; nor do I need to remind you that if you abandon that faith you are and must be without God and without hope in the world. Rather is it mine, my brethren, believing in your dedication to and your faith in Christ, to remind you of all which that implies. For we are only too apt, from the society around us, and from the floating maxims of worldly policy and carelessness, to adopt an opinion of life and of its duties as false as it is low, to give to religion but a portion of our time, and that the smallest; to offer to our Master Christ the wretched service of a divided and half-hearted allegiance. Let the light of this text of the word of God, let the burning words of this brave Apostle, fall upon all such false and timid views and shrivel them up for ever! "Ye are crucified with Christ." Your whole life, not the mere shreds and patches of your time, is His. His presence rises with you in the morning and goes to rest with you at night, is as the shadow which cleaves to you go where you will, and will not leave you even when you leave the light of life. And your every preference of selfish advantage to truth and candour, your every gratification of lustful pleasure, your every unkindness to another, are not only injuries to your own nature in its highest and best part, but they are insults, wanton, and open insults to Christ your King; for you, whose life has been crucified with His, are, with the very powers He has redeemed to a nobler service, putting Him to an open shame and again nailing Him to the cross. God forgive us all, my brethren, for such sins in the past. God save us from them in the future! May He so inspire our thoughts, and rule our desire, and mould our wills to submission to His, that we shall learn to conquer the love

of self, and each one of us take up our cross and follow Christ. That cross may be different for each, for no one life is altogether the same as another. To one it may be the bridling of a passionate and pleasure-seeking nature, to another the doing of irksome and common-place and unrequited service, to another the endurance of long years of sickness and pain. To none will it come with the accompaniments of earthly honour and applause, for however we may reverence the symbol, the reality of the cross is still in trial and suffering. But what matter this, my brethren, when we are suffering with Christ, when we are treading the road by which He went, and where we can still discern the footprints of every brave follower of the Master, of every noble and blessed benefactor and saint !

“ For all through life we see a cross,
 Where sons of God yield up their breath ;
 There is no gain except by loss,
 There is no life except by death.
 There is no vision but of faith,
 Nor glory but by bearing shame,
 Nor justice but by taking blame,
 And that eternal passion saith,
 ‘ Be emptied of glory and right and name.’ ”

XII.

NIGHT, THE TEACHER.

“NIGHT UNTO NIGHT SHEWETH KNOWLEDGE.”—*Psaln xix. 2.*

WHEN one thinks of what the mention of night at first suggests, it seems as if nothing could be further from the truth than the words of the text. A thick darkness—all the varied objects which day revealed, at one stroke blotted out, the familiar roadway turned into an unknown and perhaps dangerous path, and the most elementary knowledge of persons and things quite unavailable, is not this what we may most naturally associate with the term? Sight, the queen of the senses, becomes at once as paralyzed, and touch and hearing have lamely and imperfectly to do her office. If, then, we were required to say what night at first brings to our minds, would we not think of it as the absence of all knowledge, and do we not in popular language still associate night and darkness with ignorance and error? And yet, if we only think for a little, we must see that this conclusion cannot be true. Night is not only natural, but like all in nature, it is of God. It is just the other side of day; for as has been long ago observed, God has made everything in pairs over against each other, as heat and cold, summer and winter, light and darkness, joy and sorrow, and day and night. We learn each best through its opposite, and we cannot say of one of these that it alone is necessary or good.

It must have been observed, too, by every careful reader of the New Testament, that while it calls on us to “rejoice with them that do rejoice,” and even to “rejoice evermore,” yet it speaks constantly of sorrow and suffering as being the instrument of a finer and nobler joy, and one which works out a far more complete and enduring blessedness, giving rise to the paradox which has been expressed by our great

English thinker, that "adversity is the *blessing* of the New Testament."

Now it is so in our text, that the inspired Psalmist fixes not on day, as we would naturally expect, but on night, as the great instructress of man. He does not deny or disparage the benefits of day; that would be impossible for any servant of God to do with any divine gift. But he seems to give to night the nobler and higher place, exalting, as we so often find the Bible doing, that which is comparatively despised, to the greater honour, for while it is "day unto day that uttereth speech" it almost seems as if the other were the more effectual and convincing teacher, for it is "night unto night that sheweth knowledge."

But that we may understand of what the Psalmist here speaks, it is necessary to say just a word as to the Psalm. Like very many of these inspired utterances, it seems to mingle together the outward visible world with the inward spiritual world in a way which, at first sight, we are apt to think confusing. Beginning with speaking of the outward sun and sky, in the course of a few verses it is dealing with man's soul and God's enlightening spirit. But, brethren, the confusion is in ourselves, not in the Bible. It is because we are careless and coarse and shallow that we find this language hard. All deep thinkers, all poets, all who lead earnest and thoughtful lives, speak and think as the Bible does here. They see in the outward world, not dead matter, but a living picture, nay, a mighty spirit, which connects itself by closest ties with our own soul. The sky is not, as so often it is to us, a mere vacant expanse, the stars are not mere flaming lights. When, for example, our great poet turned up the daisy with his plough, and broke into the most touching song over it, lamenting the death of "the bonnie gem," and thinking how unlike the cruel tearing of the harsh ploughshare was to the gentle pressure of the sweet neighbour, the lark, bending it in the dewy morning; is he not more true, did he not see with a finer and clearer eye than if he had trodden the flower heedlessly into the clay? To me it seems beyond all question that such poetic

or inspired souls as these see nearer into the great heart of things, nearer into the mighty heart of God, than we who pass them idly by, and think that all outside ourselves is some dead and soulless thing which we call matter. Have you ever thought, brethren, that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who was the living Truth, and must have seen deeper into the secret of this wonderful universe than any other, always speaks with the deepest reverence of what we call the material world, and gives to it almost a spiritual character? You remember how He spoke of the lilies and the birds as giving us a striking example of a high spiritual grace. He delighted to identify Himself with what we call common material things, saying, "I am the Bread of Life," "the Living Water," "the true Vine." But to us who accept the great Christian doctrine that all things live, and move, and have their being in God, not only should nothing be common or unclean, but everything should have, as it were, a spiritual side, so that the whole world, material though we call it, should be to us what it has ever been to every profound thinker, and to every great Christian, a living parable, a speaking voice, that everywhere utters the name of God, and touches with a spiritual and elevating influence the feelings of the soul.

It is thus, as it seems to me, we get near to the divine lesson uttered by this inspired saint of God. That kingly poet-soul of David bursts into song, as again in thought he lies on these Judean hills and feels the sunshine pouring far and wide its golden flood. To him the sun is not a mere globe of fire, it is rather a living thing that he can love—a glorious king coming out of his bridal chamber in flashing crown and jewelled robe; or like some grand tireless hero exulting as he girds himself for the arduous battle or chase. Not that David was an idolater or a fool, but he was trying to express those deep thoughts, almost inexpressible in human language, that nature is not dead, but divine and alive, and that the glory of the sunshine is to every pious and poetic soul nothing less than the outflowing of the life and love of God. And so it is no transition to him,

when immediately afterwards, without any pause or break, he goes on to speak of the inward and more spiritual sunshine of God that enlightens, and converts, and saves the soul. But the thought of sunshine and day brings with it, by natural association, the thought of night; and if he valued the one, he did not, therefore, undervalue the other. He could not do this. How often when a shepherd boy he had lain on the lone hillside, when night, with its solemn silence and twilight, stole down. We hardly need his psalms to tell us how this quiet time awed and filled his young soul; and then, in the deepening darkness, as star after star came forth, or as the fair round moon with her soft ethereal light touched every rock to silver, his own words tell us how he was forced to consider these wondrous "heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He had ordained," and to consider the still more wondrous life of man, whom God had made "but a little lower than the angels," and with this experience, we cannot wonder that it was on night, rather than day, that he fixes as our great instructress, "Night unto night teacheth knowledge."

And this is the subject on which I wish us to meditate for a little—on some aspects of Night as our teacher. And following the example of the psalmist, I shall begin with the more outward and material sense of the word, and speak first of "*The Night of Stars.*"

Of all branches of science, astronomy is perhaps the most wonderful and most elevating. Other departments of knowledge tell us about the things that lie close beside us, and never raise our thoughts above our own dwelling-place; but this marvellous teacher at once lifts us in thought to the far-off heavens, and there shows us our own world, a mere speck amid the countless world of stars. And yet, brethren, but for night this wondrous science would have had no existence. As long as day lasts, we might deem that we ourselves filled the whole of creation. It is only when night falls that the darkness reveals the host of stars that tell us how small a part this earth of ours is of the mighty universe of God. It is quite true that we have no

right to suppose that David knew the wondrous truths of modern astronomy. Unless, indeed, they had been supernaturally revealed to him, he could not possibly have known them. But even apart from any knowledge of these, there is something awe-inspiring and sublime, something that fills the soul of man with great and noble thoughts, with a true and pure knowledge, in the world of stars which night unveils, and so it has been well said, even by a modern writer, "If the stars should appear but one night in a thousand years, how would men believe, and wonder, and adore, and preserve for generations to come the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown." And another great modern teacher has said, "Had no star appeared in the heavens, to man there would have been no heavens, and he would have laid himself down to his last sleep in a spirit of anguish, as upon a gloomy earth, vaulted over by a material arch—solid and impenetrable." No wonder, then, that since it was night alone that unveiled to him this great vision, which daylight had obscured, that it is to night the psalmist turns, as even a more effectual teacher than day. The very darkness which had seemed as if it would make all knowledge impossible, was thus the instrument of a higher knowledge. And we, brethren, who have learned so much in modern times of the greatness of God's boundless universe, through these orbs of heaven—we, who by our wonderful instruments and the genius of our great men, have been able to tell the distances of these stars, to weigh them, and to mark their speed, and even to tell the materials that compose them,—who have been able in thought to go away to these distant heavens, and look down on our own little earth, and see her dwindle to the minutest speck—who have learned that in comparison with these other worlds that we know and can see it is infinitely less than a grain of sand to the mightiest mountain range—we, I say, who have been able to gain all this elevating and instructive knowledge by the very darkness of night, may well recognise in night our great instructress, and be able to say with the Psalmist, "Night unto night sheweth knowledge."

But in the second place, think on *The Night of Solitude*. It is night, brethren, that chiefly causes man to be alone, that sends him in upon himself. In daytime usually we are in the company of others, or the objects of business and care which daylight reveals, draw off our thoughts from ourselves. But with the advent of night, we are sent home to our own bosoms; God sends His friendly darkness to shut man in from his daily distractions. I have no doubt that it was largely to this experience that David referred in this text. When a shepherd boy, he had been many a night alone on the hillside, and in the darkness he had felt his solitude, and learned from it more than society could have taught him. In our modern civilisation night does not thus make us alone, yet I believe that this is still God's purpose in the recurrence of darkness. Believe me, brethren, no man can live a true life who is not sometimes alone with himself; solitude has something to teach us which nothing else can. It was not for nothing that Christ, when He was teaching us the true life of prayer, laid emphasis on this, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father *in secret*." I think it one of the hardships, I might also say one of the injustices, of the life of the poor, that they can hardly obtain in their own home this solitude and quiet. In this, as in so many things, we are *practical* atheists and materialists, for we build our houses as if they were only to lodge human bodies, forgetful that they have also to train human souls. But at the worst, we have all the open air of God's night, and in that sacred solitude we can learn to pray and be alone. And when we look to the life of Christ, we are struck with the frequency with which He Himself chose the solitude of night, often going away to the lone hillside and remaining all night in prayer with God. Surely a life that is never alone, a soul that never seeks the darkness to be alone with God, is hardly to be accounted human—it is certainly not yet Christian. Well has our noblest poet said that "solitude sometimes is sweet society;" the quiet loneliness of night, brethren, will give a knowledge, a strength, and a wisdom

—especially if it rise into prayer—which day and company can never bring; and the experience of every holy and earnest life has ever been that of David, “Night unto night sheweth knowledge.”

“Night is the time to pray;
Our Saviour oft withdrew
To desert mountains far away,
So will His followers do;
Steal from the throng to haunts untrod,
And hold communion there with God.”

There is another night, brethren, that of *Sorrow*. Not in itself an actual period fixed by time, it is yet as night to our spirits, surrounding us with darkness and shutting us into solitude. In whatever form it comes to us, no human being naturally loves sorrow—we would all of us avoid it if we could. And yet we all know it is unavoidable. It follows on joy as certainly and surely as night on the day. But if what I have said be true, we should look upon it as like the night, necessary for us, and carrying also a secret blessing. Indeed, brethren, this is the deeper meaning I would have you read into the text: The night of sorrow is our great teacher. If Christ’s life teaches us anything, if the lives of those who have best followed Him have any lesson, it is this, that

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrows are unknown.”

Truly has it been said that “sorrow seems sent for our instruction, as we darken the cages of birds when we would teach them to sing,” and “as night brings out the stars, so sorrow shows us truths.” The conclusion from this is not that we should go to that sorrow half way, by being despondent or melancholy, but that we should prepare for its arrival, even as we anticipate the coming of night, by cultivating faith in God, and a patient, trustful, and hopeful spirit. Then shall we be able to say with Christ Himself, “I have been made perfect by suffering.” It is “Night unto night that sheweth knowledge.”

I have spoken, brethren, of the Night of Stars, the Night of Solitude, the Night of Sorrow, as all alike divinely-appointed teachers of man; there is but one other I must name, it is the *Night of Separation or Death*. I have shown you all through the deep truth of the text that night is a nobler teacher than day—that the gloom we at first dread is more friendly to us than the light—that God has made that which seems to take away from us what we long for, the means in reality of bringing it to us in richer abundance—it is the darkness that shows us the infinite boundlessness of the world of light—it is solitude that gives us the truest and noblest companionship, the friendship of our better self, and the endearing communion of God—it is sorrow that leads us into the noblest and most lasting joy. And so, brethren, it is death which brings us nearest to life—he who does not know death does not know life. Suppose, for an instant, there had been no death, that men had gone on for ever in this earthly, worldly life, without anyone being called away into the mysterious darkness beyond, apart from all other things that make this undesirable, as we know it is impossible, how much poorer and lower would have been our idea simply of life—how much less would we have known of life? For, brethren, what do we mean by life? Not eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and waking, and rising and walking, and commonplace talk. An animal does nearly as much—you could almost make a mere mechanism to do nearly the same. No; by life we mean something more than this, though these things must fill up a great deal of life to all of us, and to many they are all but the whole of it. But it is those things that come much more seldom into life, that yet give it all its greatness. It is love, and duty, and devotion, and self-denial, and prayer, and hope, and faith, that elevate even the common things of life and make the whole of it noble. And these would have almost no existence but for death. It is that solemn background that makes great and spiritual this life of ours. If we had not seen the loved, and the noble, and the true, go over these yet inaccessible

mountains—if we did not hear voices speaking to us from that far land—if we did not believe in a “city of God, eternal in the heavens,” and that we would there be able to reach a nobler and purer life—if, instead of having our affections and our thoughts raised to a boundless world of the great departed, the ennobled and glorified spirits of all time, who in the nearer presence of God and Christ are living out a beautiful and stainless life—if, instead of all this, we had been limited altogether to this poor, worldly, present course of things, then life would have wanted its truest and noblest meaning, we would have been like men who, afflicted with perpetual daylight, had never known the stars.

“ Oh, wondrous lights of death, the great unveiler,
 Lights that come out above the shadowy place :
 Just as the night that makes our small world paler,
 Shows us the star-sown amplitudes of space !

“ Oh, strange discovery, land that knows no bounding,
 Isles far-off hailed, bright seas without a breath ;
 What time the white sail of the soul is rounding
 The misty Cape—the promontory death ! ”

XIII.

THE SECRET OF ENDURANCE.

"HE ENDURED, AS SEEING HIM WHO IS INVISIBLE."—*Heb. xi. 27.*

THE chapter from which our text is taken has been well called the muster-roll of the heroes of the Jewish Church. The writer of this epistle is addressing his Jewish fellow-countrymen. He is showing them that the Christianity to which they had become converts, but from which they were now tempted to apostatize, was not the contradiction or destruction of their ancient faith, but rather its development and completion. As he goes on in his argument he is led to insist on the necessity of faith, which had been the secret of all true religious life even in Old Testament times, but which was now, under the higher revelation of Christ, altogether indispensable. And so in the beginning of our chapter he gives a description of what faith is: it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" and then at once to illustrate this account of faith, and to show how it had been the source of all that was grandest in the life and struggles of the past, he proceeds to call up name after name of God's saints and heroes who, simply through their faith, had achieved such mighty things and made such a lasting impression on their time. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, all these are made to pass in review before us as examples of this mighty principle, till at last, feeling as if the number of those who crowded upon his recollection were far more than he could separately cite, he simply points to that great cloud of witnesses who were constant even to torture and to death, overcoming opposing kingdoms and defeating mightiest kings, because animated by irresistible faith.

But there are two names in this splendid catalogue that seem to stir this Hebrew Christian's heart more than all the others, for he dwells on them longer and more lovingly—Abraham and Moses. No wonder these should have held

his attention and admiration. They are the greatest names in his country's history. The one was the ancestor of his race, the other the founder of his nation; and they are perhaps the noblest characters we meet in the pages of the Old Testament. More than that, however, they were specially notable instances of the elevating and sustaining power of faith, for as danger and difficulty deepened round them this sacred principle within only became more intense; and so of Moses especially the sacred writer goes on to say, "he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

And this, brethren, is what I wish to speak upon to-day—*The Secret of Endurance*; and I have chosen this text because, while it can never be inappropriate, it comes, I think, with special fitness now, on the threshold of this new year in which we are called, as it were, by the very voice of Time to new efforts at self-improvement and self-conquest, to new aspirations after devotion and faith; and in which, as we look back at the failures of the past, the one thing we at once desire and despair of is just perseverance, steadfastness, endurance.

Brethren, we need not despair. There is a way to conquer our irresolution and confusion and weakness. The life of Moses, as read by this inspired writer, tells us how failure may be avoided, not only in his case, but in every case: "*he* endured, as seeing Him who is invisible;" and for us, too, it is the sight of the Invisible that is the secret of endurance. And this is so because, in the first place, it shows us the Personal God who works with us.

Again and again in history we read of men venturing alone and single-handed into the camp or court of an enemy, and in almost every case they did so with perfect impunity. Though no one was with them, they knew, and the enemy likewise knew, that the whole power of their country was behind them, and that any insult or outrage offered to one of her children would be at once avenged by the united force and arms of the land. And so, even in modern times, we are strong with far more than our own strength. We do not need to carry arms for our own defence against the

robber or the private enemy. We are strong because we look to that invisible power we call the Law, and because we know, and all men know, that any outrage will at once be warded off or avenged by all the resources of civilization.

Now, brethren, as far as such an illustration may, this will perhaps suggest to your thought how the sight of the Invisible brings us endurance. The sight of the Invisible is the sight of God—of that living personal Father of the souls of men, who has been revealed in Christ. When through faith, aspiration, prayer, I behold Him, I know that He is working on the side of all my efforts after goodness, and, as far as He is concerned, these cannot fail. He desires my righteousness, my eternal well-being, my full and complete salvation, as much more than even I myself do in proportion as He is greater and better than I. As long, therefore, as my will goes with His, no power in the universe can harm or thwart me.

We may see this truth working in the very material universe. How feeble man is in himself. Before the mighty force of nature he is, as he has well been called, a quivering reed. But let him put himself in harmony with God's will, as revealed in material laws, and how irresistible he becomes! The wind blows his mighty ships, the sea upbears them; the steam drives his iron carriages; the telegraph carries his messages with the speed of thought; when well and securely built, gravity and cohesion will uphold his mightiest buildings, and preserve for thousands of years his colossal monuments. As long as we obey and observe these laws, nothing can oppose or defeat us. Properly construct and keep a telegraph-wire, and it *must* carry your message; nothing can possibly prevent the engine from working when the boiler is full, or the ship from sailing when the wind blows fair behind. Now, these outward illustrations are both a parable and a proof of spiritual things. That will of God, which is supreme and irresistible in nature, is not less so in the life of man; as it is in the world, so it is in the soul. I know if God be on my side, or if I be on God's side, I must surely prevail.

But can I know this? Can I pierce the veil which hides the Spiritual and Eternal? Or is there any vision granted of the Mighty Power which rules the course of time? Yes, brethren, there is; the united testimony of the Church of God tells us it is so; the experience of the countless saintly and noble ones, of whom the world was not worthy, up to that Supreme and Holy One, who could calmly say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," assures us that if there is one certainty on earth it is this—that we can see the Unseen, not with the physical eyesight, which can only touch and reveal physical objects, but with the spiritual nature, which is our true self. By faith—that deepest and yet most natural thing in us—we know God just with the same certainty as we know ourselves or our fellow-men. It needs an effort to acquire and retain this knowledge; it is only possible as we live the life of faith and pure endeavour; we lose it when we live in sin; as Christ said, only the pure in heart could see God. But an atheist or unbeliever no more disproves God than a blind man disproves the sun. And they who live as God calls us all to live, they *see* God, and that sight gives them the power to endure to the very end, because it is the sight of One who is working in us, and with us, and who cannot possibly suffer our eternal well-being to fail; who, when our will submits to His, bends all our other things resistlessly to the working out of His purpose of goodness to us.

But, again, the sight of the Invisible is the secret of endurance because it robs temptations of allurements and dangers of terror. How easy it would be to do right if there were nothing to tempt us to do wrong; how certainly we should hold to the path of duty if there were no dangers and difficulties in the way. But it is this which makes all our moral and religious life essentially a struggle; it is this which leads the Scriptures to speak of it so constantly under the figure of battle and warfare that we are continually beset by opposition in our endeavour to reach the perfect life, and become in heart and soul followers of Christ. The New Testament sums up the opposing forces we have to meet

under the threefold term of the world, the flesh, and the evil one ; that is to say, the evil which besets us in society, the evil which comes from our own lower and baser selves, and that great principle and power of evil which seems everywhere active in the life of man. The danger to our endurance comes from these ; by one or other, by all of these, every man is tried ; and again and again we see even those who began well and promised fair overcome in total shipwreck of their life and faith. We do not even need to go to the experience of others ; we have only to look back on our own lives, and we may each feel how difficult it is to persevere. That evil habit we know we have formed, which we yet hate and despise, how often have we resolved to guard against it, and yet how often it has reasserted its power over us ; that besetting sin, which in our inmost heart we have vowed to forsake, are we not shamefully conscious still that we have not broken its power ? Look at our resolutions for prayer, for a higher and purer life, for a nobler and more unworldly spirit ; how often is the prophet's description true of them, they are like "the morning cloud and the early dew," the hot day of care and business seems to sweep them quite away.

Now, brethren, the true remedy for this is in the text. Learn to look at the Invisible, have the eye of your mind and soul ever turned to God, and at once these temptations lose their power to hinder or to harm you. You remember, in the famous poem, how the true and prayerful knight had the power to see, through all her apparent beauty, the foul and evil sorceress. And in real life you remember how Joseph saw no charm in the sinful temptation, because he was looking at the Invisible, and at once put aside the base invitation with the noble words, "How can I do this great evil, and sin against God." Some one has said, if we could only see our temptation, not as it comes to us, but as it goes from us, it would have no power to draw us from the path of duty. But all these allurements to evil are like those of whom we read in many an old fable, they present to us a fair and smiling face, but by-

and-by that falls from them as a mask, and we see only the hateful and distorted countenance. Could the drunkard see in the fatal glass the shattered body and the imbecile mind ; could the sensualist see in degrading pleasure his soul made lower than a brute's, and his memory filled with an undying remorse ; could the slanderer hear in his evil whisper the breath that closes against him all nobler hearts ; could the unneighbourly and uncharitable see in the hard measure they deal out to others the cold contempt and neglect they are preparing for themselves ; could all of us, brethren, just see the *other* side of sin—not its false and fleeting attraction, but its fatal and lasting shame and loss—we would not dare to do it, we would be so overpowered by the horror of it that we would not even see its charm ; we would be like some innocent child, to whom the thought of murder is something so utterly awful that it cannot understand how human hands could ever possibly kill.

Does this elevation of mind seem to you something quite impossible and unreal ? Do you doubt if by anything we could ever be so made that at once we would only see the repulsiveness in the sins that now attract, and be filled with horror of that which, even while we put it aside, we still hanker after ? Let me ask you to think over the facts, the indisputable facts, of real life. Have you not read of, nay, have you not even known, those who have reached such an elevation of soul that you felt at once it was a moral impossibility for them not only to fall into any gross and open sin, but who were even free from those smaller sins we hardly visit with condemnation. There have been men—I have known such—who would, I believe, have found it impossible to tell a lie ; whom almost no bribe would have induced to take a mean or unfair advantage ; who never uttered an uncharitable word against another, nor gave encouragement to a single envious or hateful thought. There have been men whom the single occurrence of one low desire has pained and humbled more deeply than others would have been at the detection of an open crime. There have been those who have for long years

lived only for others in irksome yet uncomplaining service ; who, uncheered by any thought of praise, unprized, perhaps, by those they served, and altogether unknown by the great world, yet never let almost a thought stray aside from the hard path of self-denial in which they have walked. I do not mean that those have never known temptation, and never fallen into sin. It is quite otherwise. In this life, those whom we reverence as the very saints of God are just those who have felt more deeply than all others the presence of evil in themselves, for the more alive the conscience becomes, the quicker it is to feel the slightest sting of evil thought ; the more pure and beautiful the temple of the soul, the more foul and dreadful looks the slightest speck of sin. But I do say that to such souls the sins that almost make up the lives of ordinary men—the only sins that the great mass of mankind reckon sins at all—these, to such as I have described, have almost no existence ; they seem for them to have no power of allurements left in them ; if they come across their path, they are brushed aside at once as too horrible and hateful to tempt to a single glance. And yet those who have reached this height have not only been men of like passions with ourselves, but in not a few cases they have been brought to it from a former life of shame and sin far deeper and darker than any we have known. Do you ask the secret of their noble purity, and their splendid perseverance ? It is the open secret of the text, “ They endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” *They* had seen God. And just as one who looks awhile at the sun, when he turns his gaze aside, can see no object on the dull earth, because the light still fills his eyes, so they have found no attraction in the world’s pleasures, because the vision of God has made these all coarse and mean.

Or let me take one other illustration. You all know how one commanding affection or passion so fills the heart that no room is left for any other desire or fear. The mother, whose heart is filled with the one thought of saving her child from slavery, leaps on the floating ice of the broad river, where the boldest man is afraid to follow her ; the

patriot holds his hand unflinchingly in the flame, just to let his country's foemen see how unconquerable his brethren are ; the martyr thinks it a light thing that he should be torn to death by the wild beasts of the arena, rather than he should drop a grain of incense on the heathen altar. And, brethren, there is such a master passion that can fill our heart as that all other feelings will more and more give way before it. "To see Him who is invisible," is but another expression for love to Christ, who has revealed the Invisible to us, and who is Himself at once the Image and Fulness of God.

Oh, brethren, let your new year's resolve and prayer be for an entire and unceasing love to your great Master and Saviour and Lord ! Resolve to be earnest in prayer, to be watchful over your heart, to study the Scriptures, to amend your faults, to love and serve and think nobly of others. But let the beginning and end of all these resolutions and endeavours be faith and love to Jesus. Personal devotion to a personal Saviour is the secret of all noble Christian endurance, and I have not another gospel to preach, nor could I dare to preach it if I had. "There is no other name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved." Love Christ, and the love of what is sinful will inevitably die ; fear God, and you will assuredly have no other fear.

Over each of you, as you stand on the threshold of this year, over that unknown future that lies as an untrodden and unseen path before you, over all the chequered light and shade of coming joy and sorrow, success and failure, I dare, in God's name, to pronounce that, if you try to hold fast this devotion, you cannot possibly fail ; that if this love be cherished by you, nothing will move you ; that if, with an increasingly steadfast gaze, you look up to Him who, though unseen, is ever visible and near to the eye of faith, you shall have pronounced over you, perhaps by earthly lips, but certainly by heavenly spirits, these splendid words of triumph, the epitaph written by the pen of inspiration over the noblest of God's ancient saints—

"He endured, as seeing Him who is in invisible."

XIV.

MISSIONARY SERMON.

“GO YE THEREFORE, AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS.”—
(Revised version).—*Matthew xxviii. 19.*

WHEN the Duke of Wellington was commanding officer in India, he was asked by an English chaplain whether he should advise him to preach to the Hindoos. The great soldier asked, “What are your marching orders?” and the chaplain replied by quoting the words of our text. “Then,” said Wellington, “carry out your instructions; your only duty is to obey.” And in appearing before you to-night to plead the cause of Foreign Missions, I might content myself with repeating to you these “marching orders” from an authority which all acknowledge, and of pointing you to the two alternatives of either supporting Foreign Missions or proving disobedient to the Great Captain of your salvation. For surely it is not now necessary in any branch of the Christian Church to argue that Foreign Missions are a duty; and, if it were, it would only be necessary to follow the example of our own great founder, Erskine, and repeat the words which he uttered on the floor of the General Assembly, over a hundred years ago, when urging the church’s duty to the heathen—“Moderator, rax me that Bible,” for in that book to which all appeal, and which all receive, you have an unanswerable argument for this great cause. Indeed, the wonder now is, that churches which received as their supreme and infallible standard the New Testament, should ever have been blind to their duty here, when every one of its pages contains some implicit or explicit command to spread the Gospel. Open the sacred Book, and you find on almost the first page (of the New Testament), the account of these heathen, not sought by a missionary, but coming from a far land themselves to seek the Greatest Teacher of all.

Turn to its latest page, and almost its last words are these, "The Spirit and the Bride say 'come,' and let him that heareth say 'come,' and let him that is athirst 'come,' and whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely." And every page between that first and this last, is resounding with appeals to Christians to be no selfish and niggard enjoyers of light themselves, but to spread over every land the glad radiance of the truth. And in the New Testament we have not merely precepts but example to appeal to. Every saint who is held up to our imitation there was a missionary. All the Apostles were essentially such, all their companions and followers were such too. They never shrank from proclaiming the truth, however hostile their surroundings, or inopportune the occasion; and oftentimes their most successful sermons were preached with their latest breath, and their executioners became their converts.

But the Great Master of all was Himself the Greatest Missionary, though we might choose to call Him a Home Missionary rather than a Foreign. From the beginning of His public ministry to the close of His life, He continually engaged in what was essentially mission work. Look at the long preaching circuits He engaged in. Look at His eagerness to teach the crowd. Look at His absorption in His work, which made Him oblivious of hunger and weariness. And when He is about to depart from earth, what is the request which, as the dearest of all, our Master and Saviour leaves to His disciples and Church? What is the request which, as the nearest to His heart, is the last on His lips? What is the order which, as His latest utterance, the Church must look back to as His most urgent command? It is the words of our text, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations."

I have said I should be content to rest the cause of Foreign Missions on an appeal to authority; but though that ought to be conclusive, I do not mean to rest my appeal to-night on commands, however numerous and urgent; for an appeal to bare authority, even though it be the highest authority, is, at best, unsatisfactory. It is

naturally distasteful to us, because it seems to override our freedom, and it does not appeal to the intellect and to the heart. Now, God always treats us as reasonable beings. He does not lay bare commands upon us. He allows us for the most part to see the reasonableness of the command. And so I shall best proceed to-night in the development of our text by asking, "Why is it that we should support Foreign Missions?" and "What reasonable ground is there for the command laid upon us to 'make disciples of all the nations?'"

1. *The first reason I have already urged, viz.:—That it is the plain command of Christ and Holy Scripture;* but I pass on to what is more properly a reason, and say,

2. *It is because men cannot live without religion.* The sceptics of the last century used to deride religion as something altogether artificial and unnecessary—invented by the cunning of priests and kings for their own private and pernicious ends. Such an opinion is now abandoned by every educated man as utterly untenable. Religion is natural to man, and native with him almost everywhere. There may be some tribes so utterly degraded as to have none, at least none that we can readily recognize; but their position is so low, and their number so few, that we can afford to disregard them. In all ages of history, then, in all lands of the world, from the savage bowing to a shapeless stone in some primeval forest to the splendored rituals of Egypt, the matchless statues of Greece, and the gorgeous festivals of Rome, the same truth is borne witness to—religion is a necessity for man. Bacon quotes a saying, "He who would live in solitude must be either a god or a beast;" that is, he must be something more than human, or less than human, who can support a solitary life. And so we may say, He who would do without religion must be more than man or less than man. For what is religion from the human side but an attempt to answer these great questions, "What am I?" "Whence am I?" "Whether am

I going?" questions that force an answer from every human soul. Even those who, in our day, cast aside all historical revelations of religion have been driven to create for themselves a fictitious worship of humanity, and (to quote the words of a living theologian) "This century has seen more than one man relegate God to the limbo of dying superstition, only to make the memory of a woman the centre of a religion infinitely lower and less human." Yes, my brethren, as long as man is fronted by the mystery of the world and the sorrows and sins of his own life, as long as

"The weary and the heavy weight
Of all this unintelligible world,"

hangs upon his heart; as long, in other words, as man has an imagination to carry his thoughts "wandering through eternity," a conscience to burden him with the feeling of his own wrong-doing and failures, a memory speaking of the departed beloved, whom on earth he will see no more; as long, in a word, as man is man, so long will religion be a necessity, and the deepest necessity, of his nature. Not long ago, when famine was desolating China and India, every city and town in England was eager to send relief; and yet the prophet will tell you there is another famine, "not a famine of bread, but of hearing the word of the Lord." It is on behalf of those stricken with that famine I appeal to-night. Shall it be said of you that you were generous, even to excess, in supplying the "bread that perisheth," and that only when the appeal was for the bread which came from Heaven, you counted it an idle cry and gave it no heed?

3. *But a further reason, and one involved in the last, is that Christianity is the one absolute and true religion.* Our century has seen an extraordinary interest directed to the study of heathen religions, so that we are now better able to compare Christianity with these than at any former time. And in doing so, it is not at all necessary to look on any or all of these heathen religions as so many inventions of

the devil and snares of Satan. It is not only more kindly, but more Christian—not only more scientific but more scriptural—to regard these as, in great measure, so many gropings of the human spirit after God. It is so St. Paul speaks to the Athenians, when he tells them that the unknown God of their ignorant worship was He whom he came to preach, and that everywhere men were feeling after God, if haply they might find Him. And we may believe with the poet—

“That the feeble hands and helpless,
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God’s right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened.”

But whatever measure of truth there may be in these heathen religions, Christianity stands to these, not merely in a relation of superiority, but in absolute and complete superiority. Even if Christianity were only better than these, it would be our duty to displace them. But it is contrasted with them, not merely as better, but as the only good ; not merely as truer, but as the only true. Take the four great existing religions of heathendom, with all of which our own nation is in most immediate contact, and all of which are professed by our fellow-subjects.

First of all there is Brahminism, prevalent largely in our Indian empire, which not only admits to its temples licentious practices as sacred rites, but which has fastened on Indian life the degrading system of caste, and made woman the very slave of man.

Then there is Confucianism, the national religion of China ; and while there is much in the life and words of the sage who founded it that is admirable (as in that notable saying of his, “Heaven is character,”) it is, at best, a religion of cold prudential maxims, with little influence on the daily life.

Then we have Mohamedanism, also professed by many of our Indian fellow-subjects. But whatever there may be that is admirable in the life of Mahomet, and though we

may believe that God would not have suffered it to displace a corrupt Christianity unless it were better than that corruption, yet no one who looks on the degradation of woman, the vice of polygamy, the blind fatalism, the gross misgovernment of Mohamedan countries, can doubt that there we have a religion which, as judged by its fruits, must be pronounced wanting.

There is one other heathen religion, to which the greatest interest of all attaches, and that for two reasons. It is still the religion professed by the greatest number of the human race; four hundred millions—nearly a third of the human race—are Buddhists. And of all who have ever lived outside the pale of Christianity, the life of Buddha is, perhaps, the most elevated and captivating. And yet, what is this religion in its purest and most enlightened followers? A religion of despair; a religion which echoes the sad words of the Greek poet, "The best thing is never to have been, and the next best thing is that, having been, we should quickly cease to be." Think of that most touching story of which we read in the life of its founder, and just because it sets his character in the most amiable light, it makes all the more clear the utter hopelessness of his teaching. One of those poor little child-mothers, still so common in India, came with a baby on her breast to ask Buddha to cure it. He saw it was past all earthly cure, for it was dead, but the mother was too young and inexperienced to know it. "Go," he said, "and bring me a mustard seed from a house in which no parent, or child, or brother, or sister, or servant has died, and I will cure the child." The poor mother's face lighted with joy as she went on her errand. But after a weary and fruitless search she returned to say that nowhere could she find a home where Death had not been. And this was all the comfort even the gentle and sympathetic Buddha could give, that her sorrow was but the common lot—that death had seized the child, and death was everywhere. How one thinks of another Teacher, to whom not a mother, but a sister, came bewailing her loss, and of the far different words which He uttered, "I am the Resurrec-

tion and the Life. He that liveth, and believeth in Me, shall never die." And by as much as a gospel of hope is better than a gospel of despair, by so much is Christianity better than even the best of heathen religions.

4. *But, again, I ask your support to Foreign Missions because Christianity is the great agent that civilizes, elevates, and unites the world.* Christianity is a power which operates not only on individuals, but on nations. The godliness it evokes has promise, not only of the life to come, but of the life that now is, and hence Christianity is the great civilizer. I do not deny that there have been great and powerful civilizations outside Christianity, but they were deficient in many of the most valuable elements of modern life, and modern civilization is essentially the creature of Christianity. It was Christianity which first and effectually conjoined the two elements of order and liberty, of subordination and equality, and without these any high civilization is impossible. It proclaimed a respect for established order, unless it were flagrantly in the wrong, but at the same time it declared that the human conscience must have no other master than God. It recognized the necessity of different ranks and conditions in life, but at the same time proclaimed the brotherhood of all men, and the equal standing of every soul in the eye of Him who is no respecter of persons but the inflexible Judge of all. And if you will read modern history you will find that civilization followed in the track of the missionary. It was so in our own country. It was so in Germany, in Denmark, in all Northern Europe. And in modern days we have seen a notable instance of it where, in less than a generation, the cannibal tribes of Fiji have, owing to the almost unassisted efforts of the missionary, become orderly and civilized, and are now an integral portion of the British empire. But if Christianity civilizes, it also elevates communities. There is much in professedly Christian countries that all must deplore; but let anyone compare the tone, say of English public life, with that of even the best ages of Greece and Rome, and in the

reverence for what is just and true and pure, he must confess a great advance. Let the Roman satirist of the most cultivated age tell how "every vice had reached its zenith, and virtue was not only rare, but non-existent;" let the lives of Rome's greatest public men be read, and the latest historian has to accuse even Cæsar, and Cicero, and Cato of following private and personal ends; and then let our own great dramatist be heard in the advice he makes one English statesman give to another, and which, we believe, no distinguished public man of our own day would be ashamed to read:—

"Love thyself last. Cherish those hearts that hate thee :
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not ;
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's. Then, if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr !"

Yes, if our public life has been purified and elevated; if it be possible to read elevated sentiments like these as serious advice and not as satire; if no man need now aspire to eminent office whose character is not free from public stain; if English politicians are uncorrupt, and if for generations English judges have been unbribed, to what do we owe it if not to the diffusion of the Christian sentiment? And what other agent than Christianity has ever aspired to the blessed place of the world's peace-maker? Milton has sung of the birth of Christianity—

"No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around."
The idle spear and shield were high uphung.
The hookèd chariot stood,
Unstained by hostile blood ;
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng ;
And kings sate still with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their Sov'reign Lord was by."

And whatever measure of historical fact there is, it is altogether spiritually true. For the birth of Christianity was the birth of peace, and the prevalence of Christianity it is which will make men ashamed of war. Even now it is teaching men the brotherhood of nations ; it evokes pity for the captive and vanquished ; it has led, in some few instances, to the preference of arbitration to war ; and where this could not be effected, it has sent to the field of battle the Red Cross Legion for the succour of the wounded, and before that sacred symbol of humanity the guns of both belligerents are turned aside. Let only Christianity be made potent over the lives of men, and before it both private wrong and public warfare will disappear, and it shall not be vain to wish for a time

“ When the war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle flags are furled,

In the parliament of men, the federation of the world.”

And inasmuch as the cause for which I plead to-night is the diffusion of Christianity, I appeal to you to support it as the cause of the world's civilization, elevation, and peace.

5. *But I ask your support for the further reason that God seeks human help to spread the Gospel.* It is quite conceivable that God might have dispensed with this appeal to human instrumentality ; it is quite conceivable that He might have abstained from using the agency of men. Some angelic messenger, some overwhelming revelation, might have been sent to every nation, and to every individual. It is sufficient for us, however, that such has not been the case. Nor would such a proceeding have been in accordance with the ways of Providence. Everywhere God works unceasing, but also unhasting, as He to whom “ a thousand years are as one day.” Everywhere He appeals to the natural reason and mutual help of man. He hides His healing medicines for man's diseases in plants and stones for man's ingenuity to find. He leaves the means of guarding against danger,

and saving labour and weariness, the laws of science, and secrets of invention, hidden, and yet revealed, in the stars above and the earth around us. All things are given to man, but only in so far as he has industry, patience, charity. Nor is it otherwise with religion. This, too, God has given to all, but only they who seek ever find. He has entrusted to human agency its development and diffusion. But this, my brethren, makes your responsibility all the more. To these heathen you stand almost in the position of God. You have the light for which they in the darkness are groping; the comfort for which, in their sorrow, they are yearning. It is given to you, humanly speaking, to help or hinder the divine cause; for even the Apostle terms you fellow-labourers with God. Let none think themselves of too little account to help in this. Think of the Apostles, with one exception unlettered fishermen, going forth to conquer a world. Against them they had all the power, the pomp, the prejudice of the mightiest empire, yet in three centuries their cause was triumphant! Think of Luther, "the solitary monk that shook the world!" Against him were arranged the wildest of Popes and the mightiest of Emperors, and he was but a peasant's son; yet the cause of Luther is now the cause of the civilized world. Think of Livingstone, a poor weaver boy, yet his name and labours are now imperishably associated with a whole continent. These all conquered because their cause was God's, and their trust was in Him; and, brethren, it is to that same cause I summon you to-night, it is "to the help of the Lord against the mighty;" and just the more you feel your weakness and insignificance are you called to this, for the Church has ever conquered through what Milton calls "the invincible might of weakness."

6. But I appeal to you again for the missionary cause because our country is especially called to this work. Brethren, we belong to the greatest empire the world has seen. In comparison with the empire of Britain, even that of Rome seems small, for we rule over a larger and wider territory

than fell to the ancient mistress of the world in her most powerful days; and something like a fourteenth of the whole human race now speak the English language, and follow, more or less, English custom and laws. I do not speak this as an idle boast. If I did, no time or place could be more inappropriate than the present. I do so that you may ask yourselves what is the duty which follows this destiny; what greatness of responsibility is entailed by this greatness of empire. A distinguished German scholar has written a book which he entitles, "God in History," and the truth, which is the foundation of his work, is one which even the mere historical student is driven to admit. No nation ever existed merely for itself. No great nation ever existed whose influence was not felt through all times, in some possession which the world shall never lose. Every nationality should adopt the daily watch-word of the monk Bernard, "Bernard, for what art thou here?" Greece has perished. You may stand in ancient Athens and see nothing round you but the broken columns and keyless arches of her deserted temples; but Greece lives on in the undying thought of man, in the sentiment of beauty, and the love of art. Go to the banks of the Tiber, and to where the Roman Forum stood, you see the same spectacle of desertion and decay. Has Rome perished? It is the Roman law which still rules the civilized world. These great nations, small in their original extent, great only in their unconscious mission, were called by God to a mighty work. Does our country seem less wonderfully called? Look on the map of the world at these small specks, these little islands hid in the northern seas, and then follow their history; see them obtaining the dominion of the great Indian continent, colonizing America, settling Australia, opening up Africa. See them gaining the lordship of the seas, taking the lead in commerce, in manufactures, in science, and then ask what is the goal to which our history points us? What is the possession which Britain has to bequeath to the world? It can be none other than the Christian religion. I do not mean by that, that we have a

monopoly of Christianity, or are in ourselves more religious than other men. But the vast extent of our Colonial possessions, the empire we have won in the East, the ramifications of our commerce, the wide extent of our language, all give us unrivalled facilities for giving to all lands some spiritual possession. And what is the dearest gift we can bestow? What is that which is to England what her language was to Greece, and her laws to Rome, the deepest thing in her national life, at once the source and the expression of her greatness? It is her religion. The struggle for political freedom was inspired by religion; religion prompted our two great revolutions; we were fighting the battle of our religion when we won our first great naval victory; religion laid the foundation of our Colonial empire. Every great reform has had its religious side, its religious advocates, its religious arguments. Religion freed the slave, gave us our Factory Laws, and urged our national education. Religion, if she has not animated and controlled, has never been spurned or derided by any of our great men. The names that we boast of in science, in art, in politics, in war, are, for the most part, those of religious men; while our literature in its purity and its reverence is distinctly religious. I do not ask you to accept this on the authority of one whom you may regard as a special advocate, but study your country's history, or listen to perhaps her greatest statesman, and hear him declare that "Britain's energies have grown from her social and religious soundness." Yes,

"Vain mightiest fleets of iron framed,
Vain these all-conquering guns,
Unless proud England keep unstained
The true hearts of her sons."

This is the destiny the finger of history clearly points to, as assigned to Britain by the great Ruler of nations. She has been set in the centre of the world, dowered with empire, gladdened with freedom, lightened by knowledge, only that she may give to others what has been the talisman of her own safety and glory—the truth and peace of Christ.

7. *Did time permit, I should have urged upon you other arguments for this great cause, that thus you would incite your efforts with the most devoted and heroic workers the world has seen, the noble army of missionaries.* I know there are those, even in the Churches, to whom missionary is a term, if not of reproach, at least of compassionate contempt; but these cavillers only manifest their ignorance and poverty of soul. No name has been so illustrious in the service of humanity, no name less stained by ignoble ends, no name has been worn by so many pure and devoted heroes, as this despised name of missionary. All titles of honour grow pale and poor before that which has been worn by a Columba, a Xavier, a Carey, a Martyr, a Duff, and a Livingstone; and you ought to count it an honour and a privilege that in however faint and far-off a way, you may associate your efforts with theirs.

One other argument I shall only mention, for surely it needs no words of mine to urge it. I say,

8. *Gratitude to God and devotion to Christ should impel you to support this cause.* Before every Christian soul there should be ever present the picture which some here may have seen, the figure of Christ wearing the thorny crown, and underneath the inscription, "I did this for thee; what hast thou done for Me?"

A word in conclusion. I have spoken of the greatness of our country, and you may think we have been equal to the enormous wealth when you hear that in fifty years Britain gave over fourteen million pounds to missions. But in that same time we spent 1,200 millions on war. One thinks with the poet,

"Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
 Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
 Given to redeem the human mind from error,
 'There were no need of arsenals or forts."

I am not here to deny that any, or all, of these wars were inevitable; but, speaking of war, I am reminded of that better warfare in which every one before me is a dedicated

soldier; and I tell you the cause for which I plead to-night is none other than the "forlorn hope" of Christianity. You know what that means. Some almost impregnable part of a fortress has to be attempted, some commanding height in the enemy's position has to be won. In the dead of night the little band of heroes who have volunteered for the task—"the forlorn hope"—silently gather together man by man. In breathless silence they leave the rest of the army, whom they feel they shall probably never see again. The silent march begins, and soon they are lost in the darkness. What deep anxiety there is in the heart of every soldier left behind; how the moments seem to drag like hours till the roll of musketry and the gleam of light announce that the storming has begun. There is not in the whole army a coward so great as not to shoulder his musket, and fix his bayonet, and march eagerly to the relief of his comrades, fighting the distant foe. And I say, shame on you, shame on every Christian congregation, shame on every Christian man, who is not forward and ready with heart and hand, with money and sympathy, to assist and encourage those who, giving up country and home and comfort, have gone forth into the darkness of heathendom to fight the battle for Christ!

XV.

CHRISTIAN MANLINESS.

“QUIT YOU LIKE MEN.”—*I Cor. xvi. 13.*

THIS text well justifies what has been said of the writings of St. Paul, that “His words are not dead things but living beings with hands and feet,” that they are, as was said of Luther’s, “half battles.” What a splendid and rousing call is this, and how different from what many would expect from a teacher of religion—“Quit you like men.” This is the cry we would think to hear from some great soldier on the field of battle, as he leads his men right up to the hostile guns, or, as amid the deluge of shot and shell, he leads some wild and forlorn hope. It is the word which would rise to the lips of some brave seaman, as the deadly hurricane swoops down on the devoted vessel, and he calls upon his crew to follow him as he springs forward to clear the wreck of fallen spars and mast, heedless of the tempest that storms over the ship. It would be natural to the brave man, who, when some deadly explosion has occurred in the mine, takes his life in his hand as he goes down to rescue those who may yet be alive; or to him who, amid some fearful pestilence, when hundreds are dying daily, calmly goes forward at the call of duty, heedless of all infection, to relieve and succour the sick; or, yet again, to him who, when a conflagration is raging in some vast building or town, heads the volunteers who risk the flame and the falling ruins to rescue the women and children from an awful death. But if it requires a high and noble courage to give one a right to use these words, then I do not know anyone who had a better claim to them than St. Paul. And if it be the example and not the mere cry of the leader that proves contagious to his followers, I

do not know that any influence should be so powerful as his. I have read the biographies of great soldiers and sailors. There are deeds of daring that have been performed on flood and field, at the mere memory and recital of which the heart thrills and the cheeks flush; but nowhere, not even in the lives of our greatest warriors and heroes, has there been exhibited a courage more true, a devotion more noble, an endurance more inflexible, than that of this weak and broken man, who was yet the irresistible leader and great Apostle, and who with such a good right thrilled his converts, and still thrills the whole Christian Church, with this rousing trumpet-call—"Quit you like men!" But, brethren, I dare not treat these words as merely the message of even the greatest of the Apostles. If I did so, I would be untrue to the faith of the whole Christian Church, that a Greater than any mere human voice speaks to us in the words of Scripture. It is nothing less than the Mighty Spirit of all grace and truth, it is the Divine Father and Watcher of each human soul, it is the Lord and Master each Christian is vowed to serve, Who speaks this individual appeal by His servant's lips; and as if it came direct from God to each of us, so we must receive these words—"Quit you like men." I most earnestly wish to impress these words upon all here to-day, because it seems to me they give emphatic utterance to one of the great necessities of religion we are all too much in danger of forgetting. If there is one thing the Church needs to-day, it is manly Christians. All around us we see too many examples of those who, in their religion, are hardly ever else than unmanly and weak. They seem to think that religion only exists for the calamities and sorrows of life, they seek it only when oppressed with disaster or grief, or they use it only to indulge their feelings, or merely to mourn over the instability of this world, and to indulge in anticipations of the life to come. No wonder that, with such examples only too current among us, many should think in their secret heart that religion has little to do with the life of a strong and eager man, or that to make any profession of it should

be thought hardly consistent with the exuberance of youthful strength and activity, and that the very last word that should be employed to denote and recommend our faith ought to be this of manliness.

Now I uphold, on the contrary, not only that manliness and religion are not opposed, not only is our Christian Faith not alien to the spirit of active youth and resolute manhood, not only is all that we admire in the brave and heroic character not incompatible with deep and real devotion to our Lord and Master, Christ; but that if anyone wishes to secure this noble quality of character, and is ambitious to drive out of his life all poor and cowardly weakness, and to fill his soul with a rare and unflagging courage, then there is no better, no other way he can secure it than by becoming a disciple in the school of Christ. If the Christian Church were but filled with the faith of her Master, then we should see, as we have before seen in dark days, persecution, and distress, not men alone but even women and children who, in resolute faith and lofty courage, were worthy to be ranked with the noblest heroes of any land or time. Nay, I go further, and say that if we seek after the most perfect and noble manliness, it is only possible as we become sincere and earnest Christians, and they who become such cannot fail to reach this character so rightly prized. And it is my duty to-day to enforce on all, not only the excellence of such a quality as this, and how religion thereby commends itself to the young and strong who covet this distinction, but to show that to all, without exception, their Christian Faith and life demands that they excel in this—that to be without this quality is to be without a proper Christian spirit, that all of us must receive and obey the apostolic precept, “Quit you like men.”

In seeking to unfold to you the nature and the necessity of Christian manliness, I take it that there are three things that will be generally allowed to constitute the manly character—strength, courage, and endurance; and if I shall show you that these are secured in their best and highest

form by those who come under the influence of our holy religion, I shall have proved how inseparably we must connect these two things—manliness and Christianity.

1. First of all, then, the quality of the manly life. The very word we use goes to show this. A man, as distinguished from a woman or a child, is the strong one; and in the rude and early life of the world this made his value and use. He could fell the oak, and strike down the wolf or bear, and face and conquer his enemy in the battle. He who excelled in strength was able also to excel in these things, and was praised and honoured beyond others; and no quality was more coveted by rude and savage men than this of strength. But we have got far beyond that stage which places a high value on such mere physical or bodily force in itself. You know we have now a far higher and nobler idea of strength than this, which is simply the notion of the savage. It is well that any one should have bodily vigour and strength. They who have it should esteem it a good gift of God, to be valued and treasured for the best ends; but the strength most necessary for the good of the world is not mere vigour of muscle and limb. As an element of manly character, strength means simply the power of service, the energy of action; he who has most of this excels in this respect in manliness. I wish you to notice this particularly, that what we admire and honour is not strength in itself alone, but rather the ends and uses to which that is put. He who has great strength and uses it for low ends is in no respect manly.

“It is excellent to have a giant’s strength,
But it is tyrannous to use it like a giant.”

But what Christ has taught us especially to admire and love is the strength of weak things. It is said of the great religious heroes, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that “out of weakness they were made strong;” and St. Paul’s own experience was, “when I am weak, then am I strong.” In other words, Christianity has given us a new and higher ideal of strength. He is truly the strong man whose whole

being has been subdued by the Spirit of Christ—whose passions are under the control of a pure and resolute will—whose aim in life is to spread around him the highest and truest goodness—whom you feel you could perfectly trust in the most difficult situation to consider first the truest interest of others and himself only in so far as he could further these. Such a man was St. Paul, who acknowledges himself that “his bodily presence was weak ;” and yet look at his work, and see how grand and colossal it is. Such a man, of a spare and little figure, was Wesley, yet he was, and still is, a mighty influence for good over the whole religious life of England and America. Such have been many of the greatest men that have ever lived, for very often a great and strong soul has dwelt in a small and feeble body. In every true estimate of strength, one such man as these is worth more than a whole army of giants ; his power is nobler and truer than ever wielded by the most physically powerful. Even on the battlefield itself it is strength of will and of soul that tells most. The famous Napoleon, the greatest conquerer of modern times, was a little man, with a pale and delicate look ; and more than one great general has actually had to be carried to the field as an invalid. But in religion, brethren—in that which makes your truest and highest life—in that which alone gives you an enduring title to manliness—remember almost nothing depends on mere vigour of body. “Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.” “He that ruleth his spirit is better than the mighty.” The noblest thing in a man—that which makes him a man and not a brute—is his mind and soul ; make these strong and pure, as the influence of Christ ruling in them can alone do, and then in the noblest sense you will be able to “Quit you like men.”

“ In the world’s broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife.”

2. But courage is even more emphatically an element of manliness. He who faces danger and difficulty, he whom

terror will not turn aside from the path of duty, is most truly a man. Now, where shall we learn this so well as in the school of Christ? The secret of cowardice is in two things—a doubt as to the power that rules the world, and a selfish regard for ourselves in that which is least noble in us. The coward yields either because he is afraid something will do him harm, or because he fears he will lose something he values—his pleasure or his life. Now he who is truly a Christian is delivered from the dread of both of these. He cannot but believe that all things are in the hands of God the Father, who has said that the very hairs of our head are numbered, and who makes all things, without exception, work together for our good; and he cannot love self in its low and evil sense since he loves Christ. Every religious man must be courageous in the highest sense, and he who is not religious wants the best support of bravery.

When one of our English ships was sinking, in one of our earliest attempts to discover the North Pole, our admiral cheered his men with the memorable words, "Courage, my lads, we are as near heaven by sea as by dry land!" When the noble Sir Walter Raleigh was about to be beheaded, the executioner asked how he wished his head to lie on the block, and, with a gentle smile, he answered, "If the heart be right, it matters not how the head is laid." When an explosion had taken place in a Cornish mine, the men were making their escape from the fearful death, but there was little room, and one of them had to be left behind; and at once one gallant fellow chose for himself this living death because, as he calmly said to his comrades, "I am ready to die."

Now, in all these instances, what prompted this courage and gave it its rare and noble quality was the living power of religion. And I might add to these a thousand other examples, but I have surely said sufficient to show that he who has the living power of Christ dwelling in his soul cannot fail to be brave; a cowardly Christian is a contradiction in terms. But do not think we need courage only

at rare moments in life—only when some great danger confronts us. Every day we rise we must encounter some temptation; we have countless foes to fight, all the harder because they are spiritual and unseen. We have the evils of our own heart and temper to subdue; we have the sins that have become habits in us to root out and displace. Every Christian man and woman must learn a manly courage. It was with rare insight that Bunyan, in his "Pilgrim's Progress," made the type of the Christian life a warrior armed and ready for battle. We need, each one of us, the inspiring call addressed to the leaders of the armies of Israel—"Be strong and of good courage; fear not, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

3. The last element I name in manliness is endurance. If we admire strength, and if we admire courage, then we should still more admire endurance, for this is just strength and courage prolonged for a great time—holding on to the very last, and determined not to give up. When we read in history of a great inventor, like James Watt or George Stephenson, enduring failure after failure, yet still persevering in his great discoveries; or when we read of a reformer like Wilberforce, urging year after year the liberation of the slave, and still undaunted by every refusal till at length his great end is secured, do we not feel that these men are the splendid examples of our race, do we not say with proud emphasis of such as these—"This was a man."

But, brethren, this quality or power of endurance is one which religion specially confers. It teaches us we have a great work to do, which lasts as long as our life, and which must be carried on every hour of our existence; and it animates us with the thought that in this great work we have the mightiest of all assistance—nothing less than the living power of the Spirit of God and the indwelling presence of Christ. The great end to which each human being is summoned, to which each Christian is consecrated, is the salvation of his soul—the uplifting (for so I take that to mean) of the whole power and spirit of a man into the

light and peace of Christ—the rescuing of the entire being, body, soul, and spirit, from the contagion and control of evil. This is the life work of each one of us—which makes solemn and sublime the struggling existence of the very poorest. Oh brethren, to the eye of God and angels one poor human soul is greater than all the worlds that roll through space, and the conflict that goes on in your little world between sin and goodness is the object of a deeper concern than the mightiest of mere material revolutions in all the systems of suns and stars. Learn then the true value of your life. God is your salvation, your forgiveness and freedom is only through Christ. But you must assist in your own salvation, you must be a partner in it with God. And to do this you must cultivate a manly and resolute spirit; you must be strong, courageous, and enduring; you must bring your religion into the practical concerns of your daily life; and you must remember God has called each one of us to do a brave man's or a brave woman's part in this world; you must try to make your own life, and the life of your home, and the life of your trade, more true, and pure and gentle, and unselfish, and so to fulfil this summons of the apostle of your Master—"Quit you like men."

"Take thou no care for aught save truth and right;
 Content, if such thy lot, to die obscure;
 Wealth fails, and honours; fame doth not endure,
 And loftiest souls soon'st weary of delight.
 Keep innocence; be all a brave man ought;
 Let neither pleasure tempt, nor pain appal;
 Who hath this, he hath all things, having naught,
 Who hath it not hath nothing, having all."

XVI.

THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF THE FUTURE.

"IT DOTH NOT YET APPEAR WHAT WE SHALL BE . . . BUT . . . WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM."—*1 John iii. 2.*

"TILL WE ALL COME . . . UNTO A PERFECT MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST."—*Eph. iv. 13.*

THERE is no pleasure perhaps so great as that of speculating on the future which awaits something in which we feel an interest, and whose beginning or growth we are privileged to see. Suppose we are admitted to the studio of some great artist, and see him sketching the first faint outline of what will doubtless grow into some famous picture, with what delighted wonder we think of the subject he has chosen, and fill up the yet blank canvas in our imagination, and remember how for hundreds of years after we are dead this picture will be a treasure and a delight in the homes of men. Or if one sees the foundation laid of some colossal building which it may take years or centuries to build—how he again and again imagines what sort of spectacle it will present when it has risen in all its glory of tower and spire and lofty wall. Or if, again, we see a ship launched, as it glides down, gay with flags and streamers, into river or bay, how the commonest mind is impelled to forecast its future—to wonder to what far lands it will sail, what storms it may encounter, and what its final end will be—whether it will anchor for the last in some quiet haven, or go down in darkness and horror in some awful hurricane. The truth is, brethren, everything that exists has a future, and in proportion to the value and interest which belong to it that future interests us. Even the lifeless things of earth have a history, and though it is only the poet who may think of such a theme, yet he is appealing to a universal feeling when he asks what sights yon grey stone on the hill-top, or yon

rugged oak in the park may have seen in the centuries they have been there. Now, if all this is the natural feeling of our mind about things which, however great, are not in themselves endowed with life, how much more real and earnest must that feeling be as to that which is not only alive but which shares the highest life, and which is the closest to our sympathy and care! What parent does not think often and earnestly of the future of his child? what friend does not, at times at least, question the life which lies before his friend? what human soul does not, in some thoughtful time, wonder what will come to it in its future course here, and what will meet it beyond in the great hereafter? We are hardly worthy of the name of human, not to say Christian, if such thoughts have not come to us; and they are not idle or useless—mere imaginations which come and go and leave no trace behind. On the contrary, it is a very large part of religion, it concerns the deepest things in our life and conduct, how we think about the future. Not to think at all about it is to be a brute, and is almost impossible to the dullest human being. To think about the future is not, however, all that is needed. It is possible to think about it in a stupid and careless and altogether wrong way. In truth, in this as in other things, there is only one right way; and yet I believe I am correct when I say that many, very many, Christian people think about the future in a way that is contrary both to truth and Christianity. Am I not right in saying that if we would put our thought about the future, both of ourselves and of those in whom we are interested, into words, it would be something like this, “to-morrow shall be as this day;” we will go on much as we are now, we hardly hope for any great good fortune, but we do hope no great calamity may overtake us. And as to the end—well we have a vague trust that God is too good and merciful not to admit us to Heaven; though what we shall do there, or what kind of place it is, or how we shall be fitted to it, we have no idea. We rest content in this merely, that we shall get rid of all our annoyances. Now I may be wrong, but I imagine I

am right, when I say that this is the creed as to the future of the vast majority of Christians—of our neighbours and ourselves. I do not mean to say it is the creed which they would repeat in church or if they were talking religion, but it is their creed none the less, for a man's true and only creed is what he lives by, as one has said, it is "his working theory of life." Now I say, as calmly and carefully as I can, that this creed, this creed of the great majority of Christians as to the future, is nearly all wrong, and has hardly a single Christian idea in it. It is wrong and unchristian because it has too little hope, and what hope it has is fixed rather on chance, and what with all reverence I call, an easy good-nature in God. It is wrong and unchristian because it makes a clean break at death, which it thinks and speaks of as the end or period of man's life, an idea and term utterly false, I believe, to the New Testament. And, lastly, it is wrong and unchristian because it makes Heaven a place utterly unreal, and says at once far too much and far too little about it. Now I am aware these are sweeping statements to make, but the proof of them I offer is just in our text. To the Christian idea, expressed in these words taken from the two Apostles, St. Paul and St. John, life—the future of each man and woman—is full of an almost boundless hope. Not only their life hereafter, but their life here, is, if they are true to their Christianity, an ever-ascending scale of growing worth and blessedness. Death, instead of being a break in this life, does not even interrupt it; in place of making an end of what was going on here in our existence, it carries it forward and nearer to that end towards which all that was deepest in us here was leading. Lastly, Heaven, in place of being some utterly unreal state we reach by some happy accident, where we shall have as much lazy enjoyment and freedom from annoyance as we could wish, and which has little or no relation to the life we have been leading before—Heaven is just the completion of that earnest, aspiring life we have been living in our inmost hearts, the surrounding that life with all which it has been seeking after and the helping it

forward in infinitely noble progress, and, consequently, they who have not cared for that life, and who have never lived for it, are not so much shut out from Heaven as that they shut themselves out; in fact, though they stood in the midst of it, it would have no existence for them any more than it has here and now.

Now all this may not seem to you contained in our text, but if you have patience with me for a moment, I hope to show you that it is, and that, moreover, it is *the* idea and teaching of all the New Testament. St. Paul is clearly speaking about the future, and it is the future which comprehends both each individual and the whole race, both the life of earth and the life of Heaven. And how does he speak of it; what is the one idea which gathers into itself and unites all there? Listen, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Turn now to St. John, he is thinking of the future too, but, like St. Paul, it is a future that runs on uninterruptedly from earth to heaven. He has just spoken of the glorious privilege bestowed on each human being, if they will but have it and keep it, to be in fullest sense the sons of God, rising into His life and sharing the blessedness; and as he thinks to what a great height this noble life may reach in the far future, he feels that words are all too poor to describe what only the heart that has reached it can realize, he sees there is only one thing by which we can faintly imagine what the grand end of God's purpose for us is "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we shall be like Christ."

Now, brethren, observe both Apostles in one of their grandest and most impressive passages, when they speak of the future, use exactly the same idea to express it, namely, the having become like Christ, the having grown up to what St. Paul calls the fulness of our manhood. Observe, too, the one Apostle connects this with the idea of our perfection—of having reached the fulness of our true nature, of having been true to the destiny and purpose which God

appointed for us; and the other connects it with the idea of blessedness—of the very highest and purest happiness which God can bestow on a human soul, of the most lasting joy and delight which the heart of man can receive. Notice, too, both Apostles speak of this as forming the very heart and soul of heaven—without this, heaven is impossible and inconceivable; this is what makes it heaven. All St. John can speak of our future (though it was he who wrote the book of Revelation years before), all he can imagine of it is this central, yet to him all-sufficient idea, “we shall be like Christ.” And when St. Paul looks to the end of the long purpose of God, and to the issue of the labours of himself and others as “pastors and teachers,” and to all the strivings of earnest human souls, it is all summed up in this, “We have reached the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus.”

Notice, lastly, brethren, how inseparably both Apostles connect the life of earth and heaven. Death is not only no absolute break, they do not even think of it at all. Life is one, flowing on in one broad stream—the life in heaven only the full outcome and completion of that which had its rise on earth. They are one, just as a mighty river is one which you may call by two different names, and which in the beginning of its course, when it has rocks to encounter and is but a narrow stream, is foaming and turbulent, but which, as it widens out, nears the sea, flows joyously on in calm and broad majesty. So the earthly struggle leads to the heavenly rest; but both are nevertheless but the one life with the one goal—“likeness to Christ.”

To be “like Christ,” to grow up to the perfect manhood and womanhood, to the full and noble humanity of which we see in Christ the complete measure and example—I have no time to say, even if I could say, all that that means. And it is not now necessary, because I believe there is not one in this congregation so dull or ignorant as not to have some idea, however faint and poor, of the glorious excellence of the life of Christ. Now remember (for this is the thought I would impress on you), not only is this the pattern according to which your manhood or womanhood must grow, but

this is to be your guiding and ruling idea about the whole future, for yourself or for others, for earth or heaven. To be growing like to Christ, so that in the far future the process shall be in some sense accomplished, and you shall have reached to His stature in noble life, this, brethren, is God's end and purpose in us, this is the design of all these chances and accidents, so called, in our life. This is its beginning, however hard, is yet the entrance into God's peace, and in its end is nothing else than the highest blessedness and truest heaven. And I believe this life is very near and very possible to every soul. I believe in one sense it is already ours, and already begun in us. In so far as God is the beginner and sustainer of that life, it has even now an existence; for that I take to be the meaning of the words, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God."

But I dare not conceal the sad truth that what on God's side may be real, on ours may have no existence. The day may be full of sunshine, of the song of birds, and children's happy voices—but not to him who is blind or deaf, or whose heart is black with evil thoughts. And so, brethren, unless we are consciously, earnestly, prayerfully, seeking to be like Christ, unless we are with some effort and care seeking to grow in noble manhood and womanhood up to that divine height of Christ's humanity, our future here and hereafter is shrouded in blackest night of sorrow and failure. Not even the love of God can lighten and cheer this, for, if the Bible be true, even God's love can save us in no other way than this which we despise; but for ourselves and for others we may dare to hope the very highest and noblest things, if we only receive God's way of like-mindedness to Christ. If we have any warrant to apply this to others or ourselves, it is simply impossible we can hope too highly or paint the future too fair.

XVII.

EARTH'S INCREASE GOD'S GIFT.

(A Service for Harvest Thanksgiving.)

"GOD GAVE THE INCREASE."—1 Cor. iii. 6.

FOR a long period, amid rain, or snow, or frost, the ground is either lying at rest or being turned by the plough. Then, when the days are lengthening and brightening, and the voices of birds are once again heard, the seed is cast into the earth. Through the long summer days it grows, till it is the sun's own colour of gold; and then, in the busy days of harvest, it is cut and gathered and stored, till now at last we stand at the beginning of another preparation-time, having made the whole round of nature's year.

And I ask, are we to pass over in silence this long process of labour and period of time? are we to say nothing as to this great part of our lives? is this large portion of our existence to be looked upon as entirely secular, something with which religion has nothing to do? You can only believe that, brethren, when you cease to be Christian. For if there is one thing certain it is this, that our religion claims every part of our life for itself and seeks to penetrate every sphere of our activity. A man's ploughing is a religious and sacred thing as well as his praying, the field is a holy place of God as well as the Church, the harvest is a mystery of grace as well as the sacraments. "Call nothing common or unclean," "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of Christ," "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," that, brethren, is the teaching of Holy Scripture. In the Old Testament Church one of the great festivals was the day of harvest rejoicing, when the first-fruits of the earth's field were solemnly presented to God; and it is in the very highest spirit of the New Testament

that we, too, would bring the thought of harvest into our worship, and join the field and the Church, our labour and our adoration, in one service to-day.

There are two duties which the thought of harvest suggests at once to every Christian mind, and which I shall try to set before you to-day. The first is that of Thankfulness. Every religious and reasonable being must accept the precept of the great Apostle when he says, "In everything give thanks." Gratitude to God our Father is not to be, as it were, a task which we fulfil at stated times, morning and evening, in some brief prayer. It is to be part of our life, an attitude of our spirit, a method of our existence; and we are living a false and unworthy life when even in our passing thoughts we lapse into a state and temper of soul, which is morose, fretful, and ungrateful; we lose thereby our noblest peace, and degrade ourselves from our God-given dignity as the followers and brethren of Christ. But if thankfulness should always be in man's soul, there are times when it should reach a special intensity and find a definite utterance, and such a time is this general call which comes to us in an event so clearly marked and important to all here as Harvest.

But there is another end we should acknowledge at this time. God has placed us here in this world, making all things to serve our use, for man is the head and lord of all this lower creation. But man is not only master of the earth—he has, what no other being here has but himself, a mind and soul, an immortal spiritual nature, which grows and is nourished like his body, and like it demands food, but of a heavenly and spiritual kind. And God has provided for that, giving us not only "the bread from heaven," but even making the common bread, the daily sights and sounds of common life, minister to the soul as well as the body, nourish the mind as well as stay our hunger, so that, especially to any thoughtful and of necessity to every Christian man, the whole earth is a parable, a poem, and a sermon all in one. There are two great religious duties that this Harvest time brings—Thanksgiving, and the be-

holding of the inward spiritual meaning and lesson of which this is the outward picture; and I shall best, I think, help you to discharge these by trying to make clear to you our text, the pious words of the noble Apostle, so appropriate on our lips, "God gave the increase."

You know the original connection of these words. The Church which that noblest and greatest of missionaries had planted at Corinth had got into a great many difficulties. These early Christians, remember, were not the faultlessly perfect beings many imagine. They were (as the Bible says even of one of the most splendid characters in the Old Testament) "men of like passions with ourselves." They may perhaps have excelled us in enthusiasm and devotion, and possibly in some respects they had an advantage over us in being nearer to the time of Christ's earthly life, but they had the terrible disadvantage of having just come out of a state of heathenism such as it is impossible for us to conceive of, and they were still living in a heathen city which was a byword for wickedness, and whose open and unblushing iniquity I dare not, even if I could, describe. Brethren, we cannot think too highly of how much we owe to God that centuries of Christianity lie behind us, and that Christian principle is so much part of the very air we breathe that we are under their dominion even when unconscious of it. Well, we cannot wonder that these newly emancipated heathen, even though evangelized by an apostle, should have developed some very unchristian faults. Among these was the vice of party-spirit, which, I am sorry to say, even we, with all our better advantages, know only too much of. It was to counteract these vices that St. Paul wrote those two noble letters, the 1st and 2nd Epistles to the Corinthians; and if any one wants to see what wise and brave words are, let him study these books. But how did St. Paul meet this curse of partisanship—a viper brood, as we know from many an experience, so difficult to kill? These Corinthians had perverted their different preachers and teachers into party-leaders, setting one against another. How did St. Paul meet this? Listen, and you will see how

truly he has been called by one great English thinker, the noblest and most perfect gentleman that ever lived.

Though incomparably the greatest, and the one who had founded the Church, he puts himself on a level with their youngest and least known minister, and instead of condemning them for their partial appreciation of himself, and without even almost at all attacking their partisanship as a fault, he calmly effaces himself and his own services altogether, that they might see how groundless the dispute was. They, himself and his fellow-labourers, the human instruments were nothing, and it was superfluous to quarrel over them; nay, as in his noble courtesy he delights to say, they belonged to the whole Church—Paul was the property of the meanest slave. Party-spirit was impossible when they recognized that through these different channels it was the one great source of goodness that was blessing them—"I have planted," so runs the words of noble self-forgetfulness, "Apollos watered, but it was God gave the increase."

1. Brethren, all increase on earth is the gift of God—that is the first lesson of our harvest festival to-day. It seems to me we live and move in a world where all is miraculous. When people tell me they are staggered by the miracles in the Bible, my answer is that I might possibly feel that as a difficulty if I did not see miracle everywhere around me. The daisy at my feet, the bird soaring and singing in the blue above me, the fading light on the purple hills, my own body, my own mind, can I say I comprehend one of these—does not any little knowledge I get of them just show me how much greater is my ignorance? And the greatest marvel in the world is growth. Even where all things are wondrous, this seems to me most wonderful. You take a little hard grain of wheat, you bury it in the earth, and, months after, for every single grain you have perhaps a hundred. Or you take another seed, and, instead of planting it, you put it into the dead hand of a mummy. And for thousands of years, while empires rise and fall, and countless generations come and go, it lies there passive as a stone, and then, after all that long millenium, you place it

in the formless earth, and ere long you have a living thing all grace and colour and light and perfume, vicing with the costliest robe of a king. Do you understand this? Is there no mystery and marvel here? Because your own experience, or some scientific knowledge, can tell you a little about how it happens, what are its various steps, and by whatever names you may call them, are you in reality nearer to the heart and secret of the mystery? The seed grows because it has life in it; but what is life, and why should it have this strange power in it of multiplying itself? No one can answer; all the greatest scientific teachers confess their ignorance. Our own greatest and most powerful author of these days says, "The wise man is but a clever child, spelling out the hieroglyphic letters of the book of nature, the lexicon of which lies in eternity." But here, brethren, religion comes in and tells us it is God who works here and everywhere—

"Nature is but the name for an effect,
Whose cause is God."

Even reason agrees in saying—there is really only one cause in the world, and that must be Deity. We may trace some of what we call the laws of growth, but even to reason law has no meaning except as the expression of an active will. Behind every movement of nature, as its living energy, is the divine activity; and it is the profoundest philosophy, as well as the truest piety, to say, "God gave the increase." It is no antiquated doctrine then—no outworn superstition—that sees in the whitening harvest God's gift; it is what all reasonable, much more, what all religious men *must* believe. And if it be said that, if this is so, God must be the author of scarcity as well as plenty, He must withhold as well as give, for oftentime the harvest is scanty, and sometimes it altogether fails, then my answer is, Be it so; I am quite ready to accept even this conclusion. It is only what I see working everywhere in Providence. God does not wish to make us happy in any mere outward sense; He wishes to make us good. Sorrow and suffering and scarcity, I am

quite prepared to admit, are from God; but even experience as well as faith tells me they may be blessings in disguise.

“The best of men

That e’er wore earth around him was a sufferer.”

And as one of our greatest thinkers nobly says, “While prosperity was the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity is that of the New.” Even though the harvest were scanty, it would still be the goodness of God; and the truly religious spirit ever speaks out in the grand words of the old prophet—“Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Therefore, brethren, this harvest increase is to you and to all men—for this, a wide and common blessing—a special call to what should be no mere grudging payment of a debt, but rather, if we were wise to see it, the chiefest and noblest joy—Thanksgiving to our God. But the increase of the harvest is a type and symbol to us of still nobler gifts. All nature, as I have said, is, if we but rightly regard it, a parable; and the cornfield is one of the oldest schools, and both pulpit and text. You know how Christ used it in His parable of the sower; and here St. Paul is using the same symbol when in reference to his own missionary work he says, “I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” Your soul, brethren, presents the same wonderful process as your soil. As into the one has been cast the dry seed, and months after comes the living and multiplied harvest; so into the other have been cast words, and sights, and the myriad experience of years, and to-day, unless choked by foul weeds, there is the harvest of goodness, though scanty we feel at the best. And here, too, shall we not say, that while some have planted and some have watered, while we can recollect the noble book we read, that dear friendship we formed, or that crushing trial, that deso-

lating sorrow, which flooded all our life with tears, yet these influences in themselves alone cannot explain the harvest that has come—no, it is “God who gave the increase.”

2. But our second lesson is the need of human instrumentality. “God gave the increase”—that is a great and a glorious truth; but suppose I let it stand alone, may I not turn it into the deadliest error? Must I not remember along with it this, “Paul must plant, Apollos water?” Let any farmer act on the one half of the truth, and because God gives the increase, let him neither plough nor sow; you know what the result would be. The ground would not even bear nothing, it would have a crop of weeds; for nature, brethren,—and remember nature is God—will not allow any waste places of idleness in *her* world; and if man will not fill them with what is useful to him, she will fill them with that which is fair and good to her, though troublesome and evil to him. But though no man acts thus foolishly in his farm, how many do act so in their soul! “God gives the increase,” therefore I need do nothing—that is the living creed of many. God in his Providence has made me outwardly a Christian, therefore I can trust Him to make me inwardly Christ-like; as if a man were to say God has given me a farm, therefore, without care of mine, He will give me a crop. Never to pray, never to watch, never to study the Bible, never to scan our own life, never to control our passion, never to judge our faults, never to seek contact with the noble in thought and reading, never to try and gaze upon the Christ-like and divine—to live like a brute, to go round and round in life’s duties as dull and soulless as the very clod, to care for nothing beyond mean tasks and coarse pleasures, to be a slave of idle gossip and petty fashion, to have no soul-life, no inner sanctuary and shrine of our being to which we can retire, to make that a lumber-room we never visit which God meant for a temple where we should hourly pray—suppose God send all the rain and dew and sunshine of heaven upon it, what harvest but thorns and briars can possibly come from a field so neglected as this! Brethren, just because “God works *in* you,” you must work “*out* your

salvation;" just because He guards you, you must yourself stand as a good soldier equipped in the Christian armour; just because He gives you the increase, you must labour and till the field of your spiritual and nobler life. It is because you are too great, because He has made you like Himself, that God will not treat you as a machine, which we never consult and from which we ask no co-operation. You are a man, with all a man's noble nature, and great responsibilities, but if you will not act as a man, then—I say it in all solemnity—not even God Himself can save you, since you will not assist in saving yourselves.

3. One last lesson, brethren, it is this: The Purpose of Earth's God-given Increase is man's Benefit and Use.

Though only a portion of the community actually share in the labours of harvest, yet the benefit, as you know, goes out to all the world. Whatever other trades may be superfluous, this one at least is necessary; it is the oldest as it is the most indispensable of human employments. Whatever else man may do or forbear, he *must* till the ground. And if some of you think, as you may be disposed to do, that that work is a hard and materializing one, and that others are more fortunate whose occupations are more quickening and more akin to the mental and nobler part of man, I shall only say that here we meet with the law universal in life, the law which makes self-sacrifice part of the very condition of existence. Every man who works—and the man who does absolutely no work has no right to live—"He sits," as one great writer has said, "at the feast of life, and meanly departs without paying his reckoning"—every man who works is fighting some part of life's battle for others. The soldier dies, not in his own quarrel; the sailor meets the storm and shipwreck in carrying the goods of others; the mechanic wears out his life in fashioning the implements others need; the miner risks the explosion that we may be warmed; the great author cuts years from his life by study and thought that we may be enlightened; the martyr is tortured and slain that we may be free and good. It is the

lesson the harvest teaches. It waves in abundance, not for itself nor for those who sow and reap it, but that, far and wide, men may not only have food to eat, but that on the basis of this common life of the body, there may rise the flower and crown of existence, the life of the mind and soul. So in our separate individual lives, brethren, we must recognise this great law of God, written even in the material world, we live not for ourselves but for others.

“Heaven doth with us as we with torches do,
Not light them for themselves, for if our virtues
Did not go forth of us, ’twere all alike
As if we had them not.”

St. Paul here nobly says he was the property of this congregation of slaves—“Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, all are yours.” So has every great saint and hero spoken and lived, not as his own; so did the Greatest of all, the Divinest and Holiest Son of God; “He came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” And the law of our life is the same. “He that saveth his life shall lose it, he that loseth it for Christ’s sake shall keep it to eternity.” “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit.”

“Oh awful, sweetest life of mine!
That God and man both serve in blood and tears!
O prayers I breathe not but through other prayers!
O breath of life, compact of others’ sighs!
With this dread gift divine,
Ah! whither go, what worthily devise?

“If on myself I dare to spend
This dreadful thing, in pleasure lapped and reared,
What am I but a hideous idol smeared
With human blood, that with its carven smile,
Alike to foe and friend,
Mocks the poor wretch who perishes the while?

“I will away and find my God.
And what I dare not keep, ask Him to take,
And, taking, love's sweet sacrifice to make,
Then, like a wave, the sorrow and the pain.
High Heaven with joy shall flood :
For me, for them, for all, a splendid gain.”

XVIII.

SAMUEL'S PRAYER.

“SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH.”—*1 Samuel iii. 9.*

SOME of you may have read how, in what may be called the birth-hour of the Reformation, when Luther found the Latin Bible in the Monastery at Erfurt and began to read it, almost the first place he lighted on was the story of the early days of the Prophet Samuel, and he was so fascinated by the beauty and pathos of this that he determined at all costs to have a copy for himself of this wondrous book. And every one has felt the power of the narrative who has read it with any care. The birth of the child, so earnestly longed for; his surrender, still in his tender years, to the house of God; the yearly visit of his devoted mother, with her simple present of a little coat for the darling boy whom she loves but cannot keep; these are elements of true pathos, which must touch every feeling heart. But a not less beautiful chapter, and one which has inspired at least one great artist, is that which gives rise to our text. It is night, and the lamp burns dim in the Tabernacle of Israel, where the aged priest and the gentle boy have alike lain down to sleep. Suddenly, a mysterious voice seems to call the child's name. Rising, with eager and loving readiness, he goes to receive the command of the aged Eli, only to be told he has not been called. He returns to his rest, but only again to hear his name spoken, and again to wait on Eli. The old man tells him he has not called him. But when the third time the silence is plainly broken and his name clearly uttered, and the child, confident he has been called, waits once more on Eli, then the priest perceives it is a higher voice than his that has called the child, and

sends him back with this answer on his lips—"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." And all through his life Samuel seems to have been true to this noble beginning. The words which had been given him as a child read like a motto of his whole career. Down to the end, when he disappears from view, sinking heavy with years and service, and carried to his rest in a splendid funeral, he seems ever to stand before us in the attitude of pious and dutiful attention, as if his ear were only open to the voice of God and deaf to all selfish and ignoble cries. Alone, of all the great teachers of his country, he stands forth charged with no crime or error; he is the truest of patriots, the most incorruptible of judges; and it is with the indignant scorn of conscious rectitude that, when he lays down his great office, he challenges the assembled people to convict him of having ever been unfaithful to his duty, or of having received even a single bribe. He was the founder, too, of that illustrious order of the prophets, and they could not surely have had a more appropriate beginning than from him who spoke the words of the text, and whose very name means "one who listens to God." For all who were true to their commission, all the great and illustrious members of that goodly fellowship, were men who, careless of consequences in the face of tyranny and opposition and evil doing, stood up to speak the eternal truth and ever living message of God to man. Nay, even yet the spirit of the prophets is not dead, nor has their succession ceased. Every Christian, and especially every preacher, is a successor, and ought to be an imitator, of that great order in the Jewish Church. It was, as has been urged by more than one great authority, the free school of the prophets, not the sacerdotal tribe of the priests, which Christianity perpetuated in her ministry. The spirit of Samuel lived on through all the successive ages of his country's history in her noblest hearts: it lives still in all that is truest and best in the Christian Church, and that is sufficient justification for asking you to turn with me to-day, for our instruction, to that earliest utterance in which it woke to life—"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Brethren, the history of Samuel must be repeated in every human soul. For a while, indeed, parents and teachers stand to the child almost in the place of God; and it were well that those who are parents would realize this more than many do, that not only do your children now receive almost all their ideas of God through what they see in your character, but that, even to the very end of their life, your faithfulness or unfaithfulness in your religion, your piety or impiety, will either keep or hinder them in every religious aspiration and endeavour. But though for a while the parent or teacher stands, as it were, between God and the child, there comes a time, even to the youthful soul, when it hears directly the call of God to itself, and then no parent or priest should interpose. It is theirs rather to say, "My child, it is God Himself who is speaking to you; you must now try to receive His message for yourself. God loves you far more than even we do; He is able to teach you in ways far better and wiser than we know; learn to wait on Him, to love Him and trust Him, and let this be your constant prayer, 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'"

Sooner or later, brethren, as everyone that has passed childhood knows, there comes a time when we must look away from human teachers to the Divine; when the beliefs in which we have been trained, however true they are, fail to satisfy us; when difficulties begin to perplex us, which we shrink from unfolding to any elder, but have to try to fight out in the secret of our own heart. This may be a time of danger and trouble, if you will, but by no means of evil. It is, I believe, part of that divine training in which God is leading the souls of men, but especially those who are most dear to Him. It is as inevitable as it is valuable, for it is the stage at which the child is giving place to the man, at which the unquestioning trust and unreasoning obedience so natural and beautiful in the one must, if they are not to fail in their purpose, give place to the conscious faith and clear purpose of the other. It is God's call to the young soul, and direct to God the answer must be given. And happy, thrice happy, are those parents who have so

trained their children that, when God's voice comes to them, they meet it with loving welcome; and whatever they may doubt, are never able to disbelieve that goodness and purity and truth they have been taught to reverence at home. I question if, from any record of the lives of noble men, honoured alike for their services to their generation and their devotion to God, you will be able to find even a single case in which they had not devoted and pious parents, or in which they did not trace to them almost all they were. It is the child of Hannah and the pupil of Eli who, when God's voice calls him, has the reverence and readiness to reply, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

But, brethren, it may be said the great difficulty in life is not the want of this listening ear, but the absence of this speaking voice. In the far ages of the past it seems as if God were near to man. He spoke to Samuel, He talked with Abraham, He sent His visions to Jacob, His psalms to David, His words to the Prophets. The world then seemed full of God, but now we have but to repeat the old lament, "I go forward but He is not there, and backward but I cannot perceive Him." His voice then spoke loud and frequent in the ears of men, but now it seems silent or altogether dead. The feeling is natural, but none the less mistaken. All of us, perhaps, have had the experience of that great religious leader of our time—

" I dreamed that, with a passionate complaint,
I wished me born amid God's deeds of might :
And envied those who had the presence bright
Of gifted prophet and strong-hearted saint"—

but it is an error to suppose God can ever be far away from any of the souls He has made. Even as regards His manifestation to those of former ages, we must remember that the Bible compresses into a few pages the events of centuries, and that those manifestations of God that seem so frequent and many, are only so because of the distance at which we view them, just as stars which are sundered by millions of miles appear to our limited vision, and, because

of their very remoteness, as if they were close together. But in reality, brethren, the manifestations of God are really infinite now, and the voices in which He speaks to us are countless and ceaseless. They are not perhaps of the same outward and physical character, because the education of man has advanced, his spiritual nature has grown. The voice of God is not silent, though it speaks to each of us now in more spiritual and inward tones. It is no longer preceded, as it was to Elijah, by the earthquake and the fire; but even to him it only spoke when it was a "still small voice;" and we do not need, as he did, these terrible and arousing signs to awake our attention, because our Christian faith tells us God is never silent and never afar, that we live and move and have our being in Him, that Christ dwells in us, and that the Holy Spirit has His temple in our hearts; that all we need is the devout spirit, all we need is the listening ear, all we need is the earnest prayer—"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

There is one thing that must have struck every one in reading the lives of conspicuously religious men, that what seems to be the root of all the virtue and nobleness of their life, and what they themselves believed to be the spring and source of all their goodness, was just this voice of God continually heard for counsel and aid; and that their spiritual life depended on the readiness, the obedience, and devotion with which they listened to this divine utterance. Need I say, brethren, that this was essentially the creed of the apostles and founders of the Church. The idea that the Christian soul is in constant communion with God in Christ is repeated by St. Paul in every letter, and exemplified in every crisis of his life. It is Christ that directs his steps, whether to Jerusalem or to Rome, whether to freedom or to chains; it is He who strengthens him, He who enables him to perform all things. The Christian's life is a life, even now, "hid with Christ in God," or, to repeat the emphatic words of St. Paul, "It is no longer he that lives, it is Christ that lives in him." The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews is no less clear. It is God in Jesus who is the Author and

Finisher of our faith, who never leaves us, who is able to perfect us in every good work, and through whom we offer a continual sacrifice of praise. Turn to St. James, and he tells you it is God that gives all wisdom in the soul, and that administers every trying and painful experience. Listen to St. Peter, it is God that keeps us by His power, and that teaches us through His living word ; or to St. John, and it is "God that dwelleth in us and we in God, and that His spirit teaches us all things, and brings all things to our remembrance." Thus, every separate writer in the New Testament strongly impresses on us that God is continually teaching us, that He is in constant and living communion with us, and that His voice is, as it were, never silent, if only our ear be attentive and our heart obedient. And if any truth in religion can be said to be experimentally proved, this may claim to be, for, brethren, there is a wonderful and striking concord, I may say an entire and unbroken harmony, in the testimony of every noble Christian life to this great truth. Here men of all ages, of all countries, of all classes, of all degrees of intellectual attainment, of every possible shade of religious opinion, are in perfect agreement. These saints of God, these representatives of the one Catholic Church, speaking out of a life-long experience, and telling the inner source of that activity which gained them the love and reverence of their fellow-men, offer but one witness. An Augustine in the fourth century—a Neander in the nineteenth—a rude and unlettered evangelist like Matheson—a cultured and scientific man like Forbes—a Luther amid the storms of revolution—an Erasmus in his quiet student's cell—a soldier like Havelock—a peaceful missionary like Patteson—a statesman of olden time like Vane, or of modern days like Peel—an eager enthusiast like John Wesley—a quiet scholar like Sir Thomas More—a poet like Milton—a man of science like Faraday—a Roman Catholic like Montalembert—a Protestant like Kingsley—an Evangelical like Newton—a Broad Churchman like Stanley—a Trinitarian like Newman—a Unitarian like Channing—what do these men, differing in so much else, agree upon as the

deepest thing in those lives they led, each so beautiful and true—what but this, that God was ever speaking to them, and that the health and comfort of the soul were in hearing and obeying that Holy Voice.

Brethren, there are some inclined to look on this as fanaticism or mysticism—as inconsistent with sober reason, and obnoxious to common sense and general experience. I would ask them, if they are inclined to set aside the unanimous testimony of Scripture, to disregard the plain utterance of every book in the New Testament, how are they to keep their Christian faith as other than an idle tradition, and avoid disbelieving the experience of every noble Christian life? I grant, brethren, that it may be mysterious to see how God can be in constant communion with each human soul, and that by inveterate habit we are only too apt to limit all reality to that which the senses reveal. But is not everything in nature full of mystery—all things, as the old saying has it, run up into mystery—and is not the progress of science itself what one has called it, a “constant disillusion from sense?” We have here, it may be, “to work by faith, not by sight;” to confess with the greatest religious poem of our day—

“We have but faith we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see.”

Modern scepticism may speak of God to us as “a stream of tendency,” or the “unknown something not ourselves which makes for righteousness.” But surely there is nothing clearer, brethren, that either there is no God at all—a conclusion which, if not the universal reason, at least the universal religious sense of man rejects—or that God must care for the souls He has made. And if He cares for them, how can He ever cease to be speaking to them for correction, counsel, and comfort? If we could conceive it possible that God does not speak to men, that He is not constantly drawing near them with help and guidance, that the dark, mysterious, and crushing sorrows of life shall not yet finally be touched into peace by His reconciling hand, then not only is the Bible a monstrous fable, but every human father

and mother who love their children and never cease to care for them, and to follow them through time and space with their loving words and hopes, is better and nobler, and far greater in a moral sense at least, than this heartless power that sways the universe.

But—since speaking in a Christian Church and to a Christian congregation, I may safely leave the language of discussion and controversy aside—how, we may ask, does God speak to us, and how are we to practice the spirit of our prayer and learn to listen for His voice? Brethren, the voice of God is the life of God, and that is everywhere around us and within us. There can be nothing in the whole universe in which God is not, and in which He does not therefore speak. And everything which brings us near to God—everything which quickens within us the love of God—everything in us which subdues the power of evil—must render us more keen to read His message, more quick to hear His voice. Yes, let us hold fast and firm our Christian faith, that our God is no dumb idol, no helpless power o'ermastered by His own laws, no heartless Divinity, careless of each struggling life, but the living and loving Father, whose care surrounds each single person, and whose voice speaks to each separate soul.

There is a wondrous instrument which modern science has invented, and by means of it sounds that the most delicate ear could never have detected, and whose very existence we had never dreamt of, become loud and clear. And as it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual world. As, on the one hand, the loudest sounds have no existence to the ear that is deaf; as, on the other, with this aid of science the attentive ear may almost realize the old fable and hear the grass growing: so, if any of us imagine God has been silent to us, be assured it is only we who have been stopping our ears.

Oh, brethren, let us but listen, let us but have faith, let us but be earnest and religious, let us but be prayerful and sincere, and no day will ever come which will not bring us a message from God—things that formerly were silent will

surprise us by their sound. The Bible will become, what it is to every earnest Christian, His living voice ; our prayers will be a real communion with an answering God ; our conscience will be a Divine oracle ; nature, even, will speak of the Father as it did to Christ ; nay, our very misfortunes and sorrows will be changed into needful lessons of our loving Guide ; in short, the whole of our life will be full of voices. And when we pray the prayer of Samuel, or when we utter the words of the Psalmist—"Be not silent unto me, O God"—it will not be in the fear that God's voice can ever cease, but rather it will be a request that He would keep us watchful and attentive, reverent and obedient, as he was who first spoke our text ; so that, like him, this may grow into a daily prayer, and become part of the habit of our life ; so that, with the joyous confidence and childlike spirit of the great Prophet, we may ever learn to say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

XIX.

THE HEAVENLY HOME.

“IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS.”—*John xiv. 2.*

THE discourse from which these words are taken was spoken by our Lord on the evening that preceded His betrayal and death. He doubtless was seeking to prepare His disciples for what must have seemed to them the most fatal and cruel bereavement; and there are no words that have come home so powerful in consolation to millions of sorrowing hearts. Through the long ages this hymn of hope has never ceased—“Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” But the words of the text have more than an occasional value. They are not like symbols of mourning, only appropriate and useful at certain solemn and infrequent periods. Jesus did not mean simply to comfort His disciples for His absence. He was rather seeking to give them that wide and elevating knowledge of the future life which would abide with them as a continual aspiration and stimulus. And after all, brethren, while the necessity of comfort in bereavement is very pressing; while it is one of the keenest of all desires to know what becomes of the dear friends whom Death has taken from our presence; while we would give all the world to be assured of their continued and increased peace and blessedness, yet God does not gratify that desire by itself alone. He is not like a mother who seeks to still a crying child by giving it anything—it does not matter what. He will not treat us as mere children. He knows the pain of bereavement, just because it is severe, is generally a passing one; that because the sorrow is violent it is impossible it should last. Other duties and other friendships claim us, and often ere the grass is growing green

again our affliction has faded into the dimly-remembered past. If, then, the comfort God gave us referred only to our immediate loss, with our forgetfulness of that loss the comfort would be forgotten too. As the necessities and duties of life wear out the keenness of our grief, they would make the brightness of hope to fade with it. But instead of fixing our comfort down to the occasion of our sorrow—giving us with the special bereavement some as special message of consolation—God gives us a wide principle, a universal message, something that refers not only to one part of our life but to all; which has to do not only with Illness and Death, but with Life and Work. Instead of simply saying to us, “Your friend will rise again”—Christ says, “I am, everywhere and always, the Resurrection and the Life;” instead of giving a special promise of the particular blessedness of him who is departed, He gives us the universal truth, “In my Father’s house are many mansions.”

It would have been easy, brethren, for Christ to have given to His disciples some particular revelation, limited to Him and to them, referring only to that special bereavement and meeting that particular sorrow. And this, perhaps, was what they would have desired, as we know it is what, in like circumstances, we too desire. Had He performed some wonderful miracle; had He opened to their eyesight the inmost glories of Heaven; had He shown them, in some convincing and visible way, the future assured happiness of Himself and them—that would have met and comforted their trouble. Is not that how we feel in any great trouble and bereavement? As we can think on nothing but our sorrow, we want some comfort that will refer to it alone. We wish a consolation that will have a special and immediate effect. We do not wish to wait a long time till the sorrow has done its work, but at once we seek

“To reach a hand through Time, and catch
The far-off interest of tears.”

And when, in these circumstances, we are sent back on a mere general truth—when the consolation offered to us

partakes of the nature of some wide principle—we are apt to resent this comfort as unreal and quite inadequate to the bitterness of our needs.

It is, however, because of the largeness of His love that the consolations of God take this form. No wise doctor, when you are suffering from some particular pain, will direct all his attention to make that cease. On the contrary, if it be not unbearable, he will even be willing to let it continue for a time if it will help him to do what is the true aim of his calling—restore the health of your whole body. So, brethren, does God deal with us. He does not at once seek to relieve the sorrow of our heart, the pain of our special bereavement. He rather seeks to raise our whole nature, so that these very pains will become the instruments of blessing. Christ gives no individual revelation to the bereaved soul of His disciple, but he does better, for He gives to all alike what ought to be a continually inspiring and comforting view of the Life of Heaven.

Let me try to unfold to you then, as briefly as I can, what is revealed to us of the Blessed Life to come in these words.

And first I speak of its *Familiarity*.

Everyone knows how our great dramatist has spoken of the Hereafter as “the undiscovered country,” and all of us feel how true are the words of the poet—

“I ask not whither is the spirit flown,
That lit the eye which there in death is sealed;
Our Father hath not made that mystery known,
Needless the knowledge, therefore, not revealed.”

It is well to remember that the Bible tells us very little of the actual life and circumstance of Heaven. Even the glowing pictures we have in the Book of Revelation are not meant to be taken literally—they are given, not to satisfy our curiosity, but to animate our faith. We find it impossible to conceive a picture that shall satisfy us and evidence its own truthfulness as to the life of the Future Blessedness. There is so much that is beyond our present experience, that imagination is totally unable to work upon

it. We must fall back on the confession of St. Paul, and say—"Now we see through a glass darkly;" and even with the "Beloved Disciple," who was permitted to write the Apocalypse, we must own, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

But while it is well for us to keep in mind our ignorance of so much of the life to come, so as to put aside all the extravagant and erroneous pictures that are sometimes drawn of it, it is possible to push this principle too far. Very many, it is to be feared, because some think foolishly of Heaven and Hereafter, cease themselves to think of it at all. They have no thought, and hardly any belief, about the World and Life to come. But what we cease to think about, we very soon cease to have any interest in; and of what we have utterly no knowledge we can have no belief. Now, while God has seen it best for us to be left in ignorance about the future Heavenly Life, it is not a *total* ignorance. If we are ignorant of the facts and circumstances of it, we are not ignorant of its principles and laws. We cannot make a picture of it, but we can make a preparation for it. It is as if one were setting out for an utterly foreign and remote country, and some one were to come to him and say—"I can tell you nothing as to the appearance of the country, I can show you neither a picture nor a map of it, I am quite unable to describe its scenery; but one thing I can do, I can tell you what sort of person should go there, what life he should lead, and what things he should learn as a preparation for it." Would we not feel that that was the truest and most necessary knowledge for us? And that, brethren, is the kind of knowledge God has given us about Heaven—not something to satisfy curiosity, but something to animate faith, and direct our present life and endeavour. Even if we had no other revelation than that in the text—"In my Father's house are many mansions"—we would have enough to animate us to high thought and pure endeavour in following Christ.

I have said our text intimates that Heaven is a Familiar Place. Yes, though we can draw no picture of it, though

we can imagine almost nothing as to its situation, its mode of life, or its appearance, yet it is not strange. Guard against the idea of the mystery of Heaven making you think of it as utterly foreign to you. If you allow this to grow upon you, from being strange it will become unreal, and so you will cease to believe in it at all. Now, our text tells us that Heaven is not a strange place. The words of Christ express and emphasize its familiarity. He calls it the Father's House, or Home. He speaks of it as containing "many mansions"—"dwelling-places," or, as perhaps the words are better rendered, "resting-places."

But I do not depend on the mere words of the text. I rest more strongly even on the inner idea of it, and on the teaching of the whole Word of God. Brethren, our common ideas on this subject are altogether wrong, and just the reverse of what they ought to be. We think of the life of Heaven as a dim, shadowy, unreal kind of existence—of a world of shades, or phantoms, or ghosts, of a disembodied, cloud-like life, where we never really shall be at home; and we cling to this life because it seems to us so real, so tangible, so familiar. Now, we have just inverted the true order of things; it is *this* which is the unreal life; it is *here* we have the phantom existence; it is *now* we are most truly and most sadly from home. Have you ever thought of that expression in Christ's parable where He says of the Prodigal—"And when he *came to himself*?" Every sinful man is a stranger to his own soul, and the best of us in this world are never completely and truly at home with ourselves. There are depths in our nature we do not know, dark secrets in our heart we dare not disturb. There are few of us that can support the burden of being long alone with ourselves, and fewer still that would dare to unveil to others every inmost thought that passes when in society. And there are none of us ever truly at rest. We not merely desire activity and progress, but we long for change, just because we feel we cannot be at peace, because we are always dissatisfied. It does not need the language of Scripture, then, to tell us, "This is not your rest;" it is the

hourly confession of every human life. Only in Heaven, brethren, when sin no longer reigns in the soul, when no breath of evil passion and envy disturbs the calm rest of our spirit, when with the quickness of the glorified spiritual life we share each other's thoughts, or look into the depths of our own mind, untroubled by the fear of finding any gloomy and horrible thing, only then shall we be truly "at home." God and Christ and the spirits of the good, and those whom we have loved here, we shall know and share the continual society of, beyond anything we could here do. And whatever meets us of things new and strange in our surroundings shall only excite our pleased delight, but shall never disturb us with a sense of foreignness. We shall feel in the depth of calm pure souls, in the overflowing light of God's presence, that beyond anything that could ever be said of Earth, this is true what I have said of Heaven, its *Familiarity*.

But, secondly, the words of our text tell us of the *Freedom* of Heaven. I must speak of this more shortly; but allow me to say I do not mean by this the opposite of Slavery. It is no doubt the fact that this is true of Heaven. Each happy soul is there free from the tyranny of those low and degrading desires, those foul bad habits, those imperious passions, that are a worse and more degrading slavery than whip and chains alone can bring. But every Christian soul ought, in that sense, to be free here in this world, though the fulness of his freedom, his perfect and complete emancipation, will only be reached in the world to come. But by Freedom I mean to draw your attention to this fact in our text—that in the life of Heaven there is the utmost possible diversity, that each soul is free to follow its own path in a very much greater degree than on earth.

Here again we meet with a very erroneous view, widely current, which has been drawn from one or two texts. Many people think and speak of Heaven as if there we would all be doing the same thing, and always doing it. All of us have seen pictures of Heaven representing its inhabitants praising God on harps; and a great writer has

well said the only idea many people have of Heaven is that of a church where all will be gathered together through a Sunday that will never end. Now there is a certain amount of truth in these pictures. In the life of Heaven whatever any redeemed soul does it will be a continual praise to God, and the universal life and activity will be an endless worship. But our text intimates that this life of praise and worship will take endless forms and shapes. Christ does not speak of Heaven as one vast room into which all are gathered, He rather describes it as an infinite domain in which there are countless different dwellings; or, if we take the literal word, "stations" or "resting-places," it would seem to intimate that each soul has its own special surroundings, which constitute at once its labour and rest—for work there brings no weariness—and that there may be an infinitely varied progress on from one degree or resting-place to another.

In other words, Heaven, in place of being a state where our individuality will be crushed out, is one where it will have infinite room for its expansion. It is here that men are so much reduced to one dead level that each man seems very much a copy and repetition of every other. The true man, the separate and special being, lies buried and hardly alive under the accumulations of habit. It is sin, brethren, and all that comes in its train, that does this. Poverty, ignorance, vice, the tyranny of fashion, the selfishness of parents, and the social state, and our own weak, bad wills; it is these that reduce us all to one dead level of mean uninterestingness; and every man of us feels in his inmost heart, "I am not the man I might and should have been." When a great original man—a man of genius—rises up, he becomes so just because he breaks through all these opposing restraints. But in Heaven these will be done away to everyone, for they cannot exist in its perfect life. Each soul will there follow its own free, God-appointed way; it will be true there, as it is never true here, "As many men, so many minds, so many lives." And I believe it will be true that the life which here each man has longed for in his

inmost soul, provided it be a noble and worthy life, he will there reach and pursue. In what way it will be carried out I cannot tell, for we know nothing of the circumstances of the heavenly life, but I none the less believe that any pure activity we have delighted in here we shall continue hereafter. The life to come will in one sense be a continuation of the life here in all that is noblest and best in the present existence of each. The scholar, the artist, the poet, the musician will not surely find their life-long labours lost, and their source of purest joy dried up. The man who delights in serving others, and even sacrificing himself to them, will not find himself totally deprived of the opportunity of what we rightly call the divinest work and the purest joy. The friend will not discover he can no longer love and serve his friend, the mother's affection and care will not become superfluous and turn cold. Remember, we shall be the same beings then as now, and all that is deepest and purest in us must therefore continue the same. It is only the sinful (which, thank God, is never our true nature) that will fall off and die, just as the dead husk falls away from the ripened fruit. Whatever we do will be done with such a pure and happy and loving soul, that it will be the sincerest praise and worship; but what we do will be as infinitely varied as heaven is infinitely large—each soul will pursue its own special, happy life—the "Father's House has many mansions," and there we shall prove the glorious freedom God bestows.

In the briefest possible way I must mention two other facts of my text. And, thirdly, I speak of the *Fulness* of heaven. I do not mean by that simply that the life of heaven will be to each one the very opposite of the narrow, cramped, and poor life we almost all have here. It certainly is the teaching of the text that the life of heaven will be a noble, energetic, expansive life—there will be "many mansions" for each soul, many stations of progress, a large and varied activity and blessedness. But I want to emphasize the fulness of heaven in another sense, namely, the wide and ample room it holds out for all. The Father's House is

not a narrow place; it is wide as His own love, boundless as His own compassion. Heaven is not a place reserved for a select few of the race. If it were so, I, for one, would not only have no heart to preach the Gospel—there would, indeed, be no Gospel to preach—but, I say it solemnly, I could not even believe in God. When anyone begins to dogmatise on the large number who shall be excluded from the future blessedness, he ought to remember that this is just one of the points where even the theologian and the preacher should confess their ignorance; where he ought to remember the answer of Christ to the question, “Are there few that shall be saved?” was, “Strive *thou thyself* to enter the narrow gate.” One thing I do hold with all my heart, and it seems to me the clear teaching alike of all Scripture, and of the revelation of God in Christ, that if any fail of the blessedness of heaven, it is not because there is not a place and a welcome awaiting them, still less is it because the decree of God bars their entrance, it is simply because they themselves have obstinately and wilfully shut themselves out. “In my Father’s house are *many* mansions.”

But when I speak of the Fulness of Heaven, I must add along with it one last word on its *Fitness*. Heaven is not, brethren, a place to which we can go by accident or chance; we cannot hope to be admitted to it simply because God is too good to leave us outside. I say it with all reverence, but I must say it, because I believe it to be the teaching of Scripture, even God Himself could not put us in Heaven if we have not, to some degree, the heavenly character. Almost all the parables, and almost all the expressions of Scripture, represent men, not as shut out from heaven by God’s action, but by their own. In other words, brethren, heaven requires a fitness for it. That is specially intimated in our text. Not only does Christ speak here of going “to prepare a place” for His disciples, but the words of the text imply they are themselves to be prepared for the place. Every house has a relation to the character of the man who is to inhabit it. There is a sense in which you can tell a man’s nature from his surroundings. But if there be in the

world to come a special place for each—and you remember how the Scripture speaks of Judas going “to *his own place*”—then what that place is depends on what we now become. Even the great Pagan philosopher, thousands of years ago, could tell us, “Heaven is character;” and it is the certain teaching of Scripture that unless in some degree there be a heaven within us, there will never be a heaven around us. “In the Father’s house are many mansions;” but he who brought that saying of his Master to us was commissioned likewise to write, “There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”

XX.

THE SINGLE AIM.

“THIS ONE THING I DO.”—*Phil. iii. 13.*

I do not know that anywhere, even in the Bible, we may find a more admirable motto with which to begin a New Year than these words of St. Paul. And we may adopt them as ours, for not merely does the apostle elsewhere call upon us to be his imitators, but in this very place and with reference to this very sentiment he urges us to be likeminded with himself. And as the humblest soldier who fought at Waterloo might boast his share in that victory as well as Wellington, as the commonest sailor who voyaged with Columbus might exult in the new world discovered as well as the great admiral, so, though none of us have got the spirit or can ever do the work of Paul, we can set before us the same aim and record the same vow: “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

These words imply that we should have one aim in life, and that the highest. “One thing I do, I press toward the mark (or rather goal) of my high calling.” There is a sense, indeed, in which it may be said that all men, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, have but one aim in life. Quite irrespective of the character of his life, we may apply to every man the words of St. Paul, “This one thing he does.” When we look on the lives of the men around us, it seems as if nothing were further from the truth than this—their lives seem lost in numberless petty details, they are “to one thing constant never.” But let us take a truer and deeper view of life, let us look at it, not from amidst the bustle of the passing hour,

but contemplate it from the serene height of the abiding future, and we shall find that each life, amidst and through all its distractions, is and must be pursuing one aim, following one tendency, working out one result.

The difference between the apparent distraction and the real unity of our lives is the difference between the unfinished and the finished picture, or between the picture looked at closely and looked at from the proper distance. Go into the artist's studio when the picture is still in process, and you can only see a number of unsightly daubs—you cannot recognise even the rudiments of a design; but look on the picture when it is completed, and you will find that every spot of colour has its due place, and they so combine into a harmonious whole that you are not even conscious of their separate existence, you recognise simply the one idea which the picture expresses. Or again, if you look at a painting closely, you simply see a surface of various and inharmonious colours—it is not till you have retired to the proper focus that these resolve themselves into an artistic unity. And so in life, during its bustle and hurry, harassed by petty cares and amused by petty pleasures, we fulfil our days and weeks, and at the end of each, if we think at all, it is only to reflect how fragmentary each has been—we can recognise no constant progress, we can trace no uniform result. But this is only because we are standing too near our work, and because that work is yet incomplete. When we can get far enough away from our work, as, for instance, at the end of a whole year of our lives, or when we look upon the completed work—as we do when we contemplate the life of one who is dead—then the idea of life's unity becomes clear, the trifling tasks and pleasures of days and weeks have been building up one character, issuing in one result; we have been careful and troubled about many things, and yet, after all, there is but one thing we have done. If this account of our life be true, you will see that no one fulfils the end of his existence, however he may satisfy himself by merely irregular and occasional acts of generosity and goodness.

What determines your life and mine is, not the separate actions, but the whole tendency of it; and that tendency is straight onward either to God and Goodness, or to sin and wretchedness. You may trace the course of two rivers, and for a long time both may appear much the same. The one sparkles as brightly as the other, flows as placidly by the green meadows, murmurs as clearly over the shining pebbles; but the one river finds a clear and joyous entrance into the ocean, and the other is lost amid dreary marshes and shifting sands. And as with a river, so with a life—it is not its course but its tendency which determines its character. There may be fair, even noble actions in its history, but all the same its course may be downward, not upward. We are what we are, not by any isolated actions of our life, but by our life taken as one whole. There is but one right tendency, one true aim, one proper course, and to that every life must conform or be pronounced a failure.

It is remarkable that the word almost universally used of sin in the New Testament means properly “a missing of the mark;” and a sinful life is thus one which has failed to reach the true aim which God has set before it. In that Great Assize which will one day be held when “we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ;” in that “silent Court of Justice,” which even now every man carries about with him in his own conscience, there are not, as at human tribunals, many offences and many pleas, but all narrow themselves down to this—whether the goal of our endeavour has been the heavenly calling of Christ, or the earthly calling of the evil one; whether we have lived for God or for the world, for holiness or sin.

As members of the Church, I need not remind you that you, my brethren, have turned your eyes towards the goal of Christ; but do not think you can reach it by simply gazing at it when occasionally, as now, it is pointed out to you. It would be strange if Christian perfection were so easy to reach when every earthly attainment is so difficult. Ask the painter if he gained his skill by sudden inspiration, and he will tell you what years of toil it has cost him to

attain the power which appears so spontaneous. Look at the poet, who of all men has been said "to be born, not made," and see what care he will bestow upon the selection of a single word, and how, in one of the greatest in our English Literature, he will copy his verses fourteen times ere he will commit them to the press. And if the results of genius are gained only by such unremitting toil, think you the results of goodness are to be won by those who will not watch and wait? Nay, rather by as much as the attainment of a noble Christian character is greater than the production of a famous picture or poem, by so much must the ardour of our endeavour exceed the disinterested earnestness of the author or the artist. Look at any who have attained the title to be called, I do not say saints and heroes in the Church, but simply sincere Christians, and hear them tell what constant self-denial and watchfulness they had to maintain, and then let us ask ourselves by what strange illusion it is that we hope to attain a place by their side who only now and then cast a languid glance at the goal, instead of straining, as they did, with eye and hand and foot ever directed to it.

I would not have you misunderstand me, my brethren. I were a most unfaithful preacher of the Cross did I intend by these words to discourage you, to make you believe that to be a Christian is difficult, if not impossible, or to provoke the exclamation, "who is sufficient for these things." There is one sense in which it is the easiest of all things to be a Christian; it is simply to recognise the love of God in Christ and to trust ourselves to that love; it may be as sudden and as easy as passing from the mist into the sunshine or from the darkness into the light, to which indeed the Bible compares it. But this is only at best the beginning of the Christian life; and while he is a Christian in whom that life is begun, he only is a Christian beyond all doubt who has preserved it through all the assaults of countless foes unharmed till death. Now, to be a Christian in the last sense can be no light and easy thing, nor does the Bible ever represent it as such. It pictures

him as one who must be on the watch against countless foes, who will be assailed from within and from without, whom pleasures will allure and danger appal, who is never safe, and must never for a moment lay aside his sword or unbrace his armour. Or, to take the illustration which was in the mind of Paul when he wrote our text, he is like one of these runners in the famous athletic contests of Greece, who, with eager eye fixed on the goal and with hand outstretched as if already in anticipation grasping the prize, strains every nerve, thinks nothing of the course behind, sees only that which has yet to be run, is body and soul absorbed in the contest.

Either the experience of St. Paul, and of every Christian saint, nay of every good man, must be set aside, or there is but one safe course for us, and that is by adopting the motto and imitating the language of the great Apostle, setting before us the one aim of the Christian calling and pursuing it constantly. To do this we need not abjure the world, we need not earn the name of fanatic, we need neither forswear business nor pleasure. It is enough if neither business nor pleasure be ever made the excuse for doing that which we could not do as Christians, or over which we could not ask the blessing of God. We surely do not lack examples that this is possible, for of many in our busy commercial life it could be said

“There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human woe and crime.
With whom the melodies abide
Of the celestial chime:
Who carry music in their heart.
Through busy town and wrangling mart.
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

To set one aim before us and to pursue that unremittingly—if there is one thing which history teaches us to be indispensable to success it is this. It is not in romance but in the sober pages of biography that you will find it recorded how one youth of comparatively humble rank thus made it

his ambition to attain the rank of Prime Minister of England, and he died one of the most illustrious of those who have filled that high office; or how another, when playing among the village boys, himself no better than they, determined if he lived to regain the lordly possessions of his ancestors, and he lived to add new lustre to their ancient honours and to die in their old baronial castle. And no talents, however great, will compensate for the lack of a continuous purpose. Coleridge has been called "potentially the greatest English poet of the nineteenth century," and yet he has really accomplished less than any of his contemporaries. And another great English writer has, for a similar reason, the lack of a steady purpose, left almost no impress on our literature, though he might have won a foremost place; while the poet who is at once the glory and shame of Scotland, gives us, I think, the key to his sad life, when in one of his letters he writes

"I am still without an aim."

Now if this be true in regard to mere professional success, think you it can be otherwise in our heavenly calling? Think on the countless obstacles we have to overcome; how we are tempted by suggestions from without, and deceived by desires within; what faults of character one after another we must surmount; how we are tempted now to presumption and now to despair, now to a false anxiety, and now to a careless security; how every moment we live we must exercise our free will in choosing, and how each choice is a possible, nay actual temptation; how every day we live we have countless opportunities of either helping or hindering the cause of Christ, of denying or gratifying ourselves. Remember, too, what is the standard set before us by Christ. We are "to keep our garments unspotted from the world," "we are to have our lamps ever burning," we are to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." We are never to think "we have already attained, either are already perfect," and yet we are to aspire to be "perfect even as the Father which is in Heaven is perfect."

When we think on our high and heavenly calling, my brethren, we shall not wonder at the summons to have but one continuous and commanding aim, "to do but one thing," but we shall rather wonder at our own careless idleness in the past, when we sought to gain the prize of the Christian life by giving a few minutes in the day, or a few hours in the week, to the thought of it, whilst all the rest was surrendered unreservedly to the world. But not only are we called to one commanding aim—"to do this one thing;" we are likewise summoned to an oblivion of the past and absorption in the future—"we are to forget the things behind and stretch forth to those before." What, it may be said, could any advice be worse, any policy more suicidal, than this—"forget those things which are behind?" It is from the past we draw all our experience, and to give it up were to surrender all the knowledge we have gained; besides, our memory is part of our very selves, for it is only through it we know we are the same persons, and to give it up were to give up our conscious life, so that we cannot, even if we would, forget the past. It is clear it is in no such sense that the Apostle calls us to "forget the things which are behind." We must remember the illustration he had in his mind, and to which his words undoubtedly refer. He is thinking of a runner, who, if he look back to see how much of the course he has traversed, lessens his chances in the race. And we too must "forget the things which are behind; for to dwell upon them is to incur a twofold danger. There are two senses in which to remember the past is to risk the Christian life. If the contemplation of the past brings before us a dreary record of failure, still more if it darkens our soul by remembrance of some great sin, it may unnerve us for the work of the present, and deprive us of hope for the future. Or if the past is bright with some great deed, filled with the story of noble service, it may lead us to idle away the present, or, despairing of ever equalling it, to raise the despondent cry "the former days were better than these." Now, in either case it is our duty as Christian men to forget the past. Whether it would fling a dark shadow

of gloom upon our path, or tempt us to delay by turning round to gaze upon its fading glories, we must alike disregard it and hold our course right on. We are like the traveller in the fairy tale who will be brought under a spell if we turn to gaze behind us. Though voices, both of terror and entreaty, may call us, our safety consists in gazing right before. We are done with the past for ever, and its good and evil, its failure and its success, alike rest with God. But, still more, my brethren, we must forget "the things behind" because the Christian life lives in the future. It has been well said that the heathen world placed the Golden Age in the past, but Christianity places it in the future. It is not memory but hope which is one of the Christian graces, and that hope is not the fond and fleeting illusion we find on earth, it is fixed fast and deep on the promises of God, and is true as the Truth itself. Yes, my brethren, we will dare to hope great things for ourselves and for all men. Whatever our past failures may have been, "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive the things God hath prepared" for us, if we will but love him. Whatever misery and sorrow have covered the past life of man, he is not abandoned by God, and the cry will yet be heard, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

As we go forth, my brethren, to this new year on which we have entered, let us, in this sense, put away the past, "forget the things behind," and stretch forth and press on to the future. Above all, let us determine, by the grace of God, no longer to spend our lives in idleness or to fritter them away in trifles, or to squander them on our own lusts and selfishness; but, bracing ourselves up to a life of faith and prayer and Christian self-denial, determine to know nothing save Jesus Christ, to do but one thing, to press on in His heavenly calling. It may be in this year—it must be in some year not distant—that our life will come to an end, and men will talk over our course and pronounce in their secret hearts for what one thing it was we lived, and meanwhile we will go forth to receive or to be denied the prize

which by our life we have gained or lost. But even here and now we may begin to taste the sweetness of the Christian reward in making others happy and finding peace ourselves; in feeling the old and evil self dying from us and the new and divine self becoming more alive. Remember, my brethren, there is but one prize in life—the prize of the heavenly calling of Christ; all others are blanks. The world's apparent prizes are like that fairy gold the stories tell of, that glitters for a while and then turns to dust, bringing misfortune and evil on all who receive it. Be it ours to seek for another prize, to say with the poet—

“ I live for Him that loves me,
 For all that I hold true,
 For the heaven that smiles above me,
 And waits my coming too.
 For the cause that lacks assistance,
 For the wrongs that need resistance,
 For the future in the distance,
 For the good that I can do.

XXI.

THE DIVINE PARSIMONY.

“GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN, THAT NOTHING BE LOST.”—*St. John vi. 12.*

FROM one point of view the most wonderful of all the miracles of Christ were those in which, twice over, with but one or two loaves of bread, He fully satisfied the hunger of several thousands of men. I am not at this time, however, seeking to dwell upon either of these miracles, but rather to direct your attention to one incident common to them both. On both occasions we read that, after the meal thus miraculously supplied was over, they filled several baskets with the fragments that remained; and to show that was not a mere accident, so to speak, we are expressly told in one of the accounts that the command to do so came from our Lord Himself—“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.” Probably most people are at first struck with a sense of disappointment in hearing such a direction given by Christ. Perhaps they have never put their objection into words, hardly even have they allowed it to form itself in their thoughts, but none the less they dimly feel as if there were something almost unworthy of the Divine Master in these words. Surely this was concerning Himself with things too mean and small; did it not display what we would call in other men a parsimonious nature? was it worthy of Him, who had just royally fed thousands from His own stores, who had proved in so wondrous a way His power to make the creative forces of nature do Him an instant and miraculous service, to look closely after what became of the fragments of the feast? What the multitude has admired at all times in the great has been a lavish spirit. The wealthy and the powerful win popular applause when we see them most prodigal in using

their means ; and whenever they begin to husband these, to look closely after their expenditure, to take pains that no smallest thing is suffered to go to waste, does it not at once lead to the conclusion that they have become weaker in power, to the loss of their popularity, and to the fixing on them the epithet of mean and miserly? It cannot have been without a regard to its effect upon them and us that Christ gave such a command to His disciples ; not only must the thing have been right in itself—or be sure it would not have been ordered—but it must have also contained a lesson most valuable for all men, or it would not have been made so prominent.

I purpose, therefore, brethren, asking your attention now to a consideration of what I venture to call the Divine Parsimony ; to examine for a little this instance of the frugality of Christ, and to see what lessons it has to teach us.

1. And, first of all, I say that parsimony seems a universal law of the divine working. If you look up a dictionary you will find that parsimony is defined as “carefulness in the use of means,” and though we often use it in a bad or uncomplimentary sense, as when we speak of a “parsimonious man,” the thing is in itself therefore very far from wrong. Yet at first sight we would shrink from applying it to God—it seems, as I have said before, something unworthy of Him. Nevertheless, it must be true ; for if ever there was a time when we must acknowledge the divinity of Christ, surely it was at the time of this miracle. He who could feed thousands with a few loaves must have controlled the creative energies, and have been no less than the Creator. And when He gave afterwards the command of the text, here we have at least one instance of divine frugality. And yet we shrink from applying this to God in all the fulness of His power ; we think it belonged to the necessities of Christ’s human life—it was part of His humiliation. When we think of the greatness of the Ruler of the universe—of the vast and illimitable extent of His power—how the mind of man, though cultivated in the highest degree, and armed with all the instruments of modern science, still feels utterly help-

less to scan the extent of God's domain, and has to confess in the words of Job, "Lo, these are a part of His works; but how little a portion is heard of Him;" then we conclude that frugality, parsimony, carefulness, is the very last thing we ought to say of One so great and so boundless in power.

We remember, too, in what way in history great kings and emperors have shown to admiring peoples the extent of their power; how one would melt the costliest pearls into the wine, and another would spend thousands of pounds on a feast, and another would refuse to put on even the most gorgeous garments a second time. We recall what we have read of the crazes of modern wealth: how horses have been shod with gold, and fortunes paid for a piece of crockery; and we think surely that parsimony, which here we despise as almost always associated with poverty and meanness, can never be really true of the Highest Majesty and the Infinite Power. But, brethren, it is just so. Look to all the workings of God, and you seem to hear everywhere an echo of the words of Christ, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." Look at nature! At first you think you see only the most utter prodigality, the most gigantic waste. Of a thousand seeds, only one comes to birth. In a million fishes not one may reach maturity. Everywhere animals prey upon each other, or disease sweeps them in thousands away. In the primeval forest, trees and flowers and fruits perish unseen and unused. The rivers and the rains sweep the mountains into the sea, and the earthquake lays the loftiest buildings in the dust. But with all this seeming recklessness, not an atom is ever suffered to go to waste. Destruction is an impossibility in nature. You burn a candle or a log of wood, or you boil water till it evaporates in steam; but the man of science can tell you that not a particle of these substances have been lost, they have only been changed. This law of the indestructibility of matter, as it is called, is one of the surest in modern science, and it is everywhere so in nature. Nothing is too small for the care of God. Insects far too minute to be seen with the eye are yet wonderfully and beautifully made. Every power is made to serve many

ends, like the sun, which not only directly gives light and heat, but makes the wind blow and the waters run. Everywhere carefulness reigns. Nowhere is there waste ; nothing is lost. And we, brethren, are nearest to the divine life, likeliest to God in action, showing most the greatness of our nature when we shun every extravagance, restrain idle waste, and learn to husband carefully and to use only for wise and noble purposes the means God has given us. The prodigal and spendthrift is not only a fool, but he fails in the very qualities he believes he shows ; he is neither majestic nor powerful ; his very reckless profusion is the sign of degradation and weakness. The very highest power and noblest majesty is that whose principle of action is this—"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

2. But, again, the parsimony of God teaches us that all waste is an immoral thing. It has often been the case that a principle which is itself good and true has suffered because of the evil and imperfect nature of those who have exhibited it. Thus, when I speak of frugality, at once you are led to think of those who, in exhibiting this virtue, have lost nearly every other good quality, and have rightly been despised as miserly, that is, as the word literally means, miserable and mean. I would have you therefore to forget these illustrations of carefulness, and look away to the one perfect example of it which you have in God. I have said that frugality is a law of the divine life ; that everywhere in the government of the world by God we can discern abundance but never waste ; that with infinite supplies of life, the cup of creative fulness always running over, there is nothing suffered to be lost. But I go a step further, and say that we are clearly taught by this that all waste is an immoral thing, that squandering is a sin, that to be without frugality is to be destitute of what is required to make our life true, and to bring it into accordance with the law and nature of God. But, in speaking of waste, I do not wish you to think only, or even chiefly, of money or material goods. Remember what part money and material things play in life. They are

not surely the chief things in any man's existence who lives a better than an animal life. They are the things which surround his life, and on which his life acts, but they are not his life itself. His life is not made great because he has abundance of these, nor small, because he has little of them. On the contrary, the men whom we admire and love, whose life has been greatest, and whom the world holds in dearest remembrance, have almost all been poor men. Christ our Lord Himself; many of His noblest followers; our two greatest English poets; the greatest names in Italian and in Greek history; these, and a thousand such, were all emphatically poor men. Do not think, then, that I am exalting wealth, when I say waste is a sin. But what is waste? Why would it have been a wrong thing, for instance, for Christ to have allowed the fragments of bread to lie ungathered on the field? Because this would have been exactly the same thing in its nature as what we call a sin, for it would have been a direct violation of a divinely-appointed law. Every material thing, whether food or clothing or money (which represents in itself almost all articles) has a certain use, was made for a certain end. In the last result it derives that end from God, without whose creative and sustaining power it could not be. When, therefore, men, through carelessness or malice, interfere with anything serving its true end or use, they are denying and contradicting God, and their wastefulness is not only folly, but disobedience and sin. If bread be scattered uneaten upon the ground, if grain lie rotting on the field because no one will pay the labourer to gather it, if in time of scarcity, food be stored for a rise in price, and kept till it is almost useless, then in this waste there is not mere foolishness, but direct evil. But this law is of continual application in every life. It condemns the prodigal who squanders, but not less the miser who hoards, since both are perverting the only true and divinely-appointed end of wealth, the nourishment of men in health and temperance for good and noble lives by these material things. All luxurious living, all unnecessary spending on ourselves that might go to the neces-

sities of others, all selfishness which never thinks when it pleases itself how its gratification is purchased, these are each forms of this sinful waste. But the same law applies to other than material wealth. Our health, the natural powers of mind and spirit God has given us, our time, our opportunities for goodness, these are all things which to waste is to sin. It is sad to think of the gigantic waste going on everywhere. Thousands of lives are cut off every year by purely preventible diseases, because society is too selfish and careless to establish good public health. Millions of pounds are spent in riotous living, while thousands of men and women are dying of poverty and starvation. Life by too many of us is lived out in poor gossip and miserable rivalries, wasted in frivolous pursuits, or degraded into a narrow mechanical routine. Blessedness, the one grand purpose for which God made us, is unsought and unreachd. Oh, brethren, am I not right in saying that nearly each life is sad with this criminal and most sorrowful waste? It is the story of the prodigal repeated over again in society and the individual: we have taken our portion of goods, and in selfish blindness have spent them on mean ends, and now all our reward is the famine of the soul and the bitter sense that the meanest of God's creatures—the mere servants in our Father's house—are happier and better than we. Let us learn this lesson, that we cannot, as we so often impiously boast, "do what we like with our own." Neither our time, nor our health, nor our money, nor our work is ours, except as they are first God's; and when we dare to spend them on ourselves, to forget that we are stewards and not owners, to put them to other purposes than those which God has ordained, we are preparing a future of disappointment and sorrow, we are setting ourselves against the Most High, we are guilty of a waste that is grievous sin, we have been unlike Christ, scattering where we should have gathered, till all is lost.

3. But, lastly, the Divine Parsimony teaches us the infinite value we should set on our life—the incalculable worth of even the poorest human soul. I believe the cause of all

waste is that which is the cause of every sin—selfishness. Reach down to the beginning of every sin, from the most respectable to the most disgraceful, and you will find they all come from a common root—the love of self. But this self is always “our old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;” it is never that better nature which is created for righteousness through Jesus Christ. And so the paradox is true that we waste in idle selfishness because we don’t think enough of ourselves. We take the world’s own low estimate, and, like Esau, are willing to barter our birth-right for a mess of pottage. “Buying and selling, we lay waste our powers.” Professing the Christian belief, we seldom really hold that we are each one gifted with a life which is not only endless in its duration, but which is individually and separately dear to God Himself, and in which there are almost boundless possibilities of nobleness. If we really held this—if with heart and soul we grasped this as true—surely our lives would tell a different story than mean and careless waste. And I say this is true, or there is nothing true in the whole world. God knows, brethren, our lives are poor enough. Few of us have reason to think proudly of ourselves—some can only look back on a record of failure and folly. Yet, be it so; still, Christ came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” Our God and Father will not in the world of nature suffer an atom of material existence to go to waste, and He assuredly will not be less careful of a soul that resembles Himself. Our life, anyone of us may think, is but a poor wreck of what it might have been. The temple of our heart is not the fair and stately building God’s spirit designed, but one in which foul weeds are growing, while the shrine is ruined and defaced. But He who would not suffer the broken bread to lie ungathered on the ground, has not less care over a wasted existence, and His call is addressed to us not less than to His earlier disciples—“Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”

XXII.

THE LONELINESS OF CHRIST, AND ITS
LESSONS.

“YE SHALL LEAVE ME ALONE; AND YET I AM NOT ALONE, BECAUSE THE FATHER IS WITH ME.”—*John xvi. 32.*

THESE words of Christ, brethren, carry us back to the solemn night of His betrayal, for they were spoken as almost the concluding sentence in that discourse which was to be the last the disciples should hear from these beloved lips ere they closed in the awful agony of death. They were spoken, probably, in that upper room where the Last Paschal Supper and the First Christian Sacrament had been held, and from which the guilty traitor, Judas, had stealthily departed to meet the confederates whom he was to lead to the garden where they were to apprehend the Saviour.

All through the course of that farewell feast, Jesus, ever anxious for His disciples and careless for Himself, had been seeking to prepare them for the shock and sorrow which would come on them in His crucifixion. His discourses on that single occasion fill no less than four chapters in the Fourth Gospel; but judging from the brevity of the other parts of the Gospel record, these may represent only a small portion of His addresses, rousing them to consolation and courage. He had, doubtless, succeeded in preparing them in some degree to meet the immediately-trying future before them. He had evoked from them a clear declaration of their faith in Him as divinely-inspired and sent. They seemed ready to meet the great shock and trial, for which, in the kindest yet plainest way, He had sought to prepare them. Yet none knew better than Christ the difference between words and deeds. And without doubting their loyalty, and appreciating to the full their warm and loving

spirits, He knew how hard it was at once to leap to the full height of the hero, and in a moment to throw off the prejudices and prepossessions of a lifetime; and in no spirit of harsh suspiciousness, but with the same loving yet sad kindness that prompted His warning to Peter only a short time before, Jesus replies to their expressions of faith, "Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."

Brethren, these words give us a glimpse into the greatness of that sacrifice Christ made for us in His death. It was not the mere suffering on the Cross, severe and long-protracted as that was; it was not the insults and torture which preceded it, numerous and great as these were. We must remember, if we are to estimate the whole life and death of our Lord aright, that in the fullest sense of the words, "He was made like unto us." Jesus was a man such as we, possessed, as our catechism expresses it, not only of a "true human body," but also of "a reasonable human soul." That is to say, brethren, Christ felt and thought and suffered in His mind just as any man, if he were sinless, would do. Try then for a moment to realise what Christ must have suffered from the union of two opposite necessities or tendencies that met in Him, as never before they had been realized in man. On the one hand, by the necessity of His nature and position, Christ was compelled to live a solitary life. I do not mean that He was like His great forerunner, the Baptist; that He was brought up in the desert, away from all human society, and that He voluntarily abandoned the delights of human companionship. You know it was quite otherwise. Jesus lived an entirely social life, growing up in the intercourse of His home and village, and never, as far as we know, till His thirtieth year, abandoning the society of His family and friends. Even then, when He came forth on His work of public ministry, and had necessarily to lead an unsettled, He did not choose a solitary, life. While John the Baptist had his favourite haunt in the

southern and uninhabited part, close to the wilderness, Jesus chose His in Galilee, the most populous part of Palestine, crowded everywhere with villages and towns. Yet though outwardly and by choice the life of Christ was the very opposite to the life of the solitary, He was unavoidably compelled to be really much alone. Everyone acknowledges the truth which our great modern poet has expressed—

“To sit on rocks, to muse o’er rock and fell,
 To slowly trace the forest’s shady scene,
 Where things that own not man’s dominion dwell,
 And mortal foot hath ne’er, or rarely been;
 To climb the trackless mountain all unseen,
 With the wild goat that never needs a fold;
 Alone o’er steeps and foaming floods to lean,
 This is not solitude; ’tis but to hold
 Converse with Nature’s charms, and view her stores unrolled.

“But ’midst the crowd, the hum, the shock of men,
 To hear, to see, to feel, and to possess,
 And roam along the world’s tired denizen,
 With none who bless us, none whom we can bless;
 Minions of splendour, shrinking from distress!
 None that with kindred consciousness endued
 If we were not, would seem to smile the less,
 Of all that flattered, followed, sought, and sued;
 This is to be alone; this, this is solitude!”

Here, brethren, it is the voice of the disappointed worldling, of the votary of pleasure, or at least of the man in whom selfishness mingles largely, that speaks; and such can be no representative to us of the mind of Christ. But if the selfish and sinful are often compelled to feel alone amid a multitude, it is no less true of the noble and good that they often realize what another great poet calls the city’s “crowded loneliness.” For where there is a being with aims in which as yet few or none can be brought to take an interest—one who has designs which are such that they are beyond the comprehension of all but a very limited

circle—one who finds much to repel him in the things which almost all around him are eagerly seeking after, and who can enlist almost no one to take a deep interest in those things to which he has given up his whole heart—one, moreover, who has experiences and feelings, in which, perhaps, none but himself has ever shared—one who has dreams and hopes which have never dawned in any soul but his—then it is clear that such an one must live a lonely life, even though he were never withdrawn from the crowd of men. And such, brethren, has been the lot of almost every man who has ever truly deserved the name of great. No matter in what field he has been distinguished, no matter what is the class of benefit he has conferred upon the world, it has been only possible to him through isolation. Loneliness is the penalty of distinction. Solitude is the price that must be paid for every new blessing bestowed on man. This is true very often even of mere mechanical inventions. Read the record of scientific and industrial discovery, and you will see at what a price many of the improvements that are now welcomed and employed by everyone had to be secured by their first inventors. It was so in the case of the printing-press, of the steam-engine, of the weaving-machine. The lives of Palissy, the Potter, of Arkwright, the inventor of the spinning-machine, of Columbus, the discoverer of America, to take only a few out of the host of examples, were spent for years amid every opposition and discouragement, and in the noblest part of their life and endeavour they were made to feel that they stood quite alone. But it is so in a much more special degree with those who wish to reform, not some procedure of man's outer life, but the inner world of his spirit and disposition; for here the prejudice is far harder, and the opposition more intense. Every great reformer, every devoted missionary, every pre-eminent preacher, has felt that he must be for years, if not for a lifetime, almost, or altogether alone. It was so with the Prophets of the Old Testament, down even to the last and greatest—they were too often but a solitary "voice, crying in the wilderness." It was so with Luther and with

Knox, for, although they had their disciples and friends, much of their battle had to be fought alone. It was so with the heroic Henry Martyn, who died, after years of exile, in a land thousands of miles away from his place of birth, without a single convert.

And what was true in all these was true in our Lord, but in a measure utterly beyond these examples. For the greatness of Christ confessedly transcended all other examples, and the higher the greatness the more utter the loneliness, just as the loftier the mountain is, the more barren and cold is its summit. Then beyond all these examples, Christ lived before His time. He had, that is to say, desires and designs that more utterly transcended all the ideas and wishes of his countrymen. You know how, though He had selected twelve of the best and noblest, and sought to train them as His disciples, He found even these, up to the very time of His death, and in spite of His repeated instructions, utterly unable to enter into many of His thoughts, so that again and again He had to address them sadly, "Ye know not what spirit ye are of;" "Do ye not yet understand, O ye of little faith?"

Christ, brethren, read the inmost secret of the heart of man; its longing desires, which it could not itself interpret. He plainly discerned. He looked into the future, and laid there, solid and secure, His plans for all the coming ages of the world; and His purpose embraced in its design of blessing, not a favoured few, but the whole human race. And with designs so great as these, occupying not a part, but absorbing the whole of His existence, Christ must have stood, even in His mere human life, in the deepest feelings of His heart, quite alone.

Now, while it has been said by one great English writer, that to endure solitude a man must be "a god or a beast"—that is, more than human, or less than human—yet it is nevertheless true that there are certain great natures who seem as if they could willingly and almost easily bear the trial of loneliness. Such a character as the Prophet Elijah or John the Baptist, or, in modern history, our own Reformer

Knox, these seem men, not destitute, indeed, of tenderness, but with so large an amount of self-reliance, with so little of the emotional or sensitive, at least on the surface of their nature, made so rugged and stern as well by training as by temper, that they seem eminently fitted for heading an unpopular cause; and in the solitary life that falls to their lot sympathy seems almost thrown away. It was quite otherwise, however, brethren, with our Lord. I do not for a moment mean that there was anything weak or yielding in the character of Jesus. No; the greatest of His martyrs and disciples, the most unbending and inflexible of reformers, were but imitators and followers of Him who could hurl His repeated woes at the heads of the all-popular Pharisees, and indignantly cleanse the temple from the trafficking of all-powerful Sadducees, and never flinch nor falter in His path of suffering, though he plainly saw it leading up to a Cross. But with all this, the heart of Jesus was the most tender and sympathetic. It has been pointed out by one of the most gifted preachers of modern days, that if we are rightly to estimate the character of our Lord, we are to remember that He possessed all the virtues and graces of woman as well as of man—that He embraced in His single person the whole fulness of human nature. If He was strong and unyielding as the firmest and most heroic man, He was tremblingly sensitive, quick and keen in sympathy, desirous of the presence and support of kindred and loving natures as the most tender woman. And this gave rise to that other trait in His character, so strangely blended with His loneliness, and which must have made that so hard to bear. Compelled beyond all others to live alone, none ever so yearned for sympathy. With but a few as His avowed disciples, and these few so unable to understand Him, none ever so sought to gather up the whole world of man in the arms of His brotherhood and love. And at this time, brethren, when the greatest trial of His life was approaching—on this very evening, when He knew with certain prescience that even His chosen few would leave Him all alone—when He could only too well antici-

pate that chorus of condemnation, that unanimity of hatred, which was to surround Him on His trial and beset Him on His Cross, how strong, how eager, how yearning, must have been the desire of Christ for the solace and sympathy of even one kindly and feeling heart. Only a little hour after this, when He was about to offer His prayer in the garden, He yet asked three of His disciples to be near Him, that even the consciousness of their neighbourhood might comfort Him. And surely it must have been not the least of the trials of this time of suffering, surely it must have been with a heavy and sinking heart, surely it must have been almost with foreboding and dread, that Jesus uttered the sorrowing anticipation, "Ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave Me alone." Yet immediately, brethren, the soul of Jesus is filled with a lofty courage. The moment He touches, as it were, the depths of sorrow in these words, He rebounds to the height of a splendid confidence. His very longing for sympathy, and the failure to find it even in His chosen followers, reminds Him of a sympathy, infinitely fuller and more effectual than any human society could be; and He hastens, as it were, to correct and amend His words with the triumphant declaration, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." Yes, there could be no solitude so irksome in which this would not be sweet society, there could be no isolation so complete but this could master and overcome it, nor could there be any loneliness so crushing to the spirit but this would enable it even to triumph and rejoice.

Brethren, we are none of us called to be as solitary as Christ was; His is an experience so transcendent as never to be repeated by any other. Most probably, too, we shall none of us ever be called to that experience of isolation which is the penalty of greatness, for God, if He has set our station in the humble and obscure ways of life, has made us free from the loneliness in which all great men must do their work. Yet none the less the lesson which Christ's solitude teaches is not superfluous to any human soul. For, brethren, after all, it is not only the world's great heroes

that must live alone. They are called upon to do it in an eminent degree. They are cut off from the sense of companionship and neighbourhood which are the resources of lesser men. But even the commonest man or woman must, to some extent, lead a solitary life; and not once, but again and again, even the humblest of us here, even those of us whose character seems most commonplace, and whose life has been most uneventful, may address even his nearest neighbour, even his closest companions and friends in the very words of Christ, "Ye shall be scattered every one to his own, and shall leave Me alone."

Let me instance, brethren, only a few of these experiences in which every one of us must taste of solitude. Every one is alone in sickness, in temptation, and in death. Take sickness as an example. Happily, there are very few (none of us here, I trust) who are really without human help and sympathy. Kind friends attend us, and do all they can to relieve our pain and to cheer our loneliness. But it is still true that we are alone. Our sickness sends us in upon ourselves in a peculiar way—we have thoughts and feelings, hopes and fears, which others cannot share. Especially is this the case when our sickness is serious, and threatens to affect our whole life. Then thoughts rise up in our heart, we can breathe into no human ear, not even the dearest. Why God should thus deal with us, why we are laid aside from the pleasure and activity of life, why we are to be condemned to years of lingering pain and helplessness, why, either through a short indiscretion, or, it may be, through no fault at all, all our life is to be clouded and impaired; these are doubts which we can tell to no one, and which we are left all alone to resolve. O brethren, in that hour (and sooner or later, remember, that hour will come to us all) let us take Christ's lesson to heart, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Even now let us prepare for that experience by learning how real is God's fatherly love, and how surely He meets our loneliness; how they that trust Him, rest untroubled even in their worst ills; how sickness itself becomes by this transfigured into blessed-

ness and peace ; how the invalid, in his very weakness, becomes often the strongest and most enduring force for goodness, just as two of the sweetest and truest singers of all England's poetesses sent forth their far-spread poems and hymns from a sick room ; just as one of France's noblest thinkers and writers was in almost constant pain ; and just as in all countries and in all ages many of the dearest saints of God, most powerful over others for goodness, have been

“ The holy ones and weakly,
Who their Cross of suffering bore.”

But we are alone no less in *Temptation*, and this, remember, is no isolated experience, but the almost constant trial of every soul. This battle we have to fight in our secret heart is one which no fellow-man can either overlook or share. Alone we have to meet our spiritual foe ; alone we have to face evil suggestions, and conquer or yield ; alone we have to listen to conscience upbraiding us for sinful thoughts and desires we would not tell in any human ear. But here, brethren, we are “ alone, and yet not alone.” That secret world of temptation and struggle lies all open to the eye of God. He has not ceased to watch with eager, loving interest every varying fortune of the fight. Let us fall back on the consciousness of this Presence in all future temptations ; let us be bold to tell to Him the secrets we would shrink from uttering to any mortal ; let us feel, when again we are tempted, that we are “ not alone, because the Father is with us ;” and before His prevailing Presence, if we but realize it and cherish it, the mightiest powers of evil must ultimately flee in confusion and defeat.

Lastly, we are alone, all of us, in the hour of *Death*. It is this, brethren, which perhaps makes the thought of our departure so awful to almost every one. It is not the pain of dying, for that is often far less than we have already endured. It is the anticipation of loneliness ; that the dearest and kindest friends who surrounded us can only accompany us a little way ; and that beyond, through what the oldest poetry in the world calls the “ valley of the

shadow," into what even to the Christian is so largely "an undiscovered country," we must depart alone. And yet surely not alone, "if the Father is with us;" not alone, if Christ's presence fills the soul with peace; not alone, if the Spirit of God is whispering courage and hope. It is thus, brethren, that countless saints of God in all ages have felt death to be almost a gladness and triumph; for what to human eyes seemed awful solitude, has been the nearest presence of God. It is when all others leave us most alone, that then, above all, "the Father is with us."

"Father! what hast Thou grown to now?

A joy all joys above;

Something more sacred than a fear,

More tender than a love.

"With gentle swiftness lead me on,

Dear God! to see Thy face;

And, meanwhile, in my narrow heart

O! make Thyself more space."

XXIII.

SOWING AND REAPING.

“BE NOT DECEIVED ; GOD IS NOT MOCKED : FOR WHATSOEVER A MAN SOWETH THAT SHALL HE ALSO REAP.”—*Gal. vi. 7.*

IN introducing the great principle of the text, you will observe that the Apostle considers it necessary to preface it by a double caution or warning—“Be not deceived ; God is not mocked.” That is to say, however important and evident this great truth may be there is some tendency, some predisposition in the heart of man either to ignore it or to misrepresent it ; and we know from our own experience that such is the case. Moral and religious truths are not like those of Science and the world of outward fact. What is the correct theory of the movements of the heavenly bodies—what is the truth or untruth of the law of gravitation ; as to all these facts or laws of the material world we have a still unprejudiced mind, for our own personal conduct is in no way involved in them. We can judge of these as indifferently as a spectator can discuss the justice of a criminal trial in which he is in no way involved. But when we come to moral and religious truths, our position and capacity for judgment are quite altered. Here we are no longer indifferent spectators—we are all of us criminals at the bar ; and though the conscience of the prisoner may sometimes side with the judge, he is none the less disposed to interpret the law in such a way as to screen himself. This shows us the caution we should continually exercise in arriving at any conclusions on morals or religion, for according as we determine the truth, one way or other, we either condemn or we absolve ourselves. Even such an abstract truth as the nature of God we cannot approach with

unprejudiced minds, for we may determine it in such a way as to throw upon the Creator some measure of blame for our own wrong-doing—as when one of our greatest poets writes, extenuating his own faults,

“Thou know’st that thou hast made me thus,
With passions wild and strong.”

In fact, as every truth in morals or religion bears directly or indirectly upon our own conduct, and according as it is determined, one way or other, either aggravates or lessens our guilt, you will see that we cannot come to the discussion with a mind quite unbiassed. And so the Apostle feels it necessary to give us an especial caution in the present case; for this great principle, “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,” is one which not only touches the conduct of all of us, but it touches every moment of that conduct. There is not a moment of the life of any man which is not passed under the dominion of this great law; he can no more set it aside, even for an instant, than he can escape from his own shadow. It rules his whole life, from the most careless word he utters to the most deliberate and long-planned crime he commits; escape from it he cannot. It is as universal and as resistless as the law of gravitation, which, by one and the same mighty impulse, holds the greatest suns in their place and moulds the dewdrop on the humblest wayside flower.

Now this law, which holds us all so remorselessly to the consequence of our past deeds, be they small or great, trivial or important, is one which bears so hard upon us that we try to escape from it, and we seek either to forget it or to explain it away. The careless and the trifling say it cannot be so rigid as is supposed. It may be that our great sins shall pursue us like avenging furies, but the careless word or action of a moment cannot have a lasting effect. God may reckon with us for our great debts, but he is not a usurer to count the meanest farthing we owe; and, whether we reason in this way or not, most of us practically live on in this belief, thinking ourselves sufficiently scrupulous if

we trouble ourselves about great faults, but not seeking to reckon the trivial sins and shortcomings of passing moments, holding it quite impossible that so trifling things could leave any permanent consequences behind. Nay, my brethren, even religion has been invoked, consciously or unconsciously by many, to do away in great measure with this great principle; and one truth of Christianity has been employed to explain away another. Do not think, my brethren, I would dare to say a word against the crowning truth of our holy religion—the possibility to even the worst of repentance and forgiveness; but when this glorious gospel is used to explain away this other equally certain truth, when we hear it said that a moment's repentance—the belief in God's forgiving love—and all the consequences of years of folly and sin are arrested and thrown back; that the few hours of penitence on a sick-bed destroy the fruit of an entire life—all we can say in reply to this is simply to reiterate the Apostle's words—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

But let us see what this great principle is, and whether it is possible it can ever be set aside. In speaking of it the Apostle uses language which belongs properly to the world of outside Nature, because the things that belong to our inward spiritual life being unseen, though not less real, have to be spoken about in illustrations borrowed from what takes place before our eyes. Just, then, as whatever a man sows in his field he must reap the same, as it would be impossible for him to sow one kind of grain and reap another, so every part of our moral life, every desire and thought, every word and deed, produces its appropriate and proper fruit. You know that it is impossible for a man to sow barley and to reap wheat, to plant roses and to gather thistles. And why do you know this? It is because you know that what you reap is connected by invisible but certain links to what you have sown; that from the time the seed sinks into the furrow, when it is scattered abroad in the early spring, on to the time when the mellow harvest

waves in the autumn days, there has been no break ; that, could you see beneath the clods and watch the growing grain during the spring and early summer, you would never be able to say here there has been something new, something different ; that day by day all you would see would simply be the seed expanding itself, shooting up into the green leaf, lengthening its stock, developing its fruit, but never by any possibility deviating into something else. It is because of this you know that whatever kind of grain you sow you must reap the same. But we may go further still and ask, why is it that there is never any change—why is it that on some night of summer the field of growing wheat does not suddenly assume the appearance and properties of barley, or the bright blossoms of the rose-tree be suddenly changed into the white cups of the lily? Then the only answer we can give to such a question is that not only would it contradict and render useless all human experience, it would introduce confusion into the realms of order and law ; it would mean that we could no longer speak of such a thing as the laws of Nature, and no longer trust to them. But to all who believe (as every Christian must, and every reasonable man should) that what we call the laws of Nature are only God's methods of working—then, if such a confusion we are supposing were ever to take place, it would mean that the God of Nature had become unnatural, that the God of Order had introduced disorder, that God had contradicted, denied, mocked Himself. For it must not be said or thought that a miracle is equal to such a confusion as we have supposed. No miracle we read of in the Bible is a violation of the laws of Nature ; nay, no careful theologian or teacher will now speak of them as a breach of natural law. When Christ changed the water into wine, or made a few loaves suffice for the wants of thousands, He violated no natural law but drew upon the hidden resources of divine power. His action was beyond our knowledge, but it did not contradict any law that guides us in our daily life. For the sake of some high, spiritual end He—the Incarnate Divine One—gave to water, by the agency of

laws unknown to us, the properties of wine ; but this is something quite different from saying that, for no such end and in simple disorder, the growing grain might suddenly be changed into something quite other than what was sown.

Now, my brethren, if God, in his constitution and ordering of the material world, has ordained to everything its own proper nature, and has caused that every seed shall produce a corresponding fruit—do you think it can be otherwise in the moral world, the field of Right and Wrong, the sphere of man's daily life ? As every seed has a special nature, so every action, be it small or great, has a determinate character—it is either right or wrong. God has affixed to every right action the fruit of blessedness, order, and peace ; and every wrong action the fruit of unhappiness, disorder, and unrest. You cannot conceive for a moment of those consequences being reversed, for to do so would be to introduce not merely disorder, it would be to introduce wrong, and to make God the author not only of confusion but of evil. Now, my brethren, every action must have consequences. You cannot speak the simplest word, think the most careless thought, or encourage the most passing desire, without these having their effect. They may be quite imperceptible to you, but the effects are there nevertheless. Look at the hour-hand of a watch, and however you strain your eye you cannot detect the faintest sign of motion, but you know that it moves, however slowly. Place a stone under a falling drop of water, it receives not the faintest impression ; but leave it there for years, and you will easily see the hollow. It is so with our life. We are only able to see the effect of trivial actions upon our conduct when they have been often repeated. But just as the hour-hand has been moving every moment, and as every drop of water has been wearing the stone, so every trivial action has been exerting its unseen influence. What we are each of us to-day, alike for good and for evil, is the outcome not of great virtues or great vices. Even when a man rises to the one or sinks to the other, he never does so by a sudden leap. The great deed that rouses us to admiration, or strikes

us with horror, is simply the sudden outcome into light of the accumulations of hidden good or secret evil.

I have dwelt too long on what may seem to many a mere commonplace, but the solemn warning of the Apostle shows us that this is a truth we are only too apt to set aside. But some may object that I have spoken a mere moral discourse, and have forgotten that God's forgiveness is needed by the best—is not denied to even the worst. God forbid, my brethren, I should fail to preach the gospel of the forgiveness of sins through Christ ; but that does not set aside this equally certain truth that every action has its appropriate result, and that that result is unalterable, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." When we repent and receive God's forgiveness, the whole spirit of our life is changed ; but we have no right to say that a single result of our former conduct is suppressed, and all our experience points the other way. When the drunkard or the profligate repent of their sins, not merely do they not regain the health they have shattered in evil courses, even the more spiritual results remain, and the polluted memory and the pangs of remorse are never, in this life at least, quite overcome. These may become by God's grace instruments for goodness—they may keep the convert humble and lead him to a profounder horror of sin—but none the less they serve to show that not even for the repentant can God annul his great law—"Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

My brethren, let me impress upon you two very obvious lessons from our text. The first is, that we cannot be too careful, too watchful over every moment of our life. I do not say that you cannot live as Christ's disciples unless you consecrate your whole life to Him, and count nothing too trifling or unimportant to be done in a Christian spirit, and performed as to your Lord. That is an important truth, but it is not the one it is my present duty to enforce. That truth is that your most trifling action has, and must have, its lasting effect for good or for evil upon your own character and upon the world around you ; that you can neither

escape its consequences nor alter its effect. If, therefore, the great moral poet says—

“Guard well thy thoughts;
Thy thoughts are heard in heaven.”

we may further add—Guard your every word and deed, for once they are uttered or done you have set in motion something whose consequences you cannot calculate, and whose effects you can never undo.

And the second lesson, my brethren, is that every moment of our life we are building up our future, and that that future takes its complexion from the present. As some one puts it:—

“The future comes not from before to meet us,
But from behind streams up over our heads.”

Or, as the Apostle tells us—“He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” These are the only two possible goals towards which every action tends, and in one or other of which every life must issue. For if there is one truth you can read written in clearest letters on the whole history of man, shining like a halo round the brow of saints, gleaming as in lurid flame from the countenance of the criminal—a truth to which every conscience echoes and every heart responds—which even the sceptic, who denies a God yet admits “a Power that makes for righteousness,” is compelled to admit—it is this truth of the text. Yes, we may deceive our own hearts, but we can neither mock God nor arrest His divine laws, and both decree that “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.”

XXIV.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH
AND MINISTRY.

An Ordination Sermon.

“AND HE GAVE SOME, APOSTLES; AND SOME, PROPHETS; AND SOME, EVANGELISTS; AND SOME, PASTORS AND TEACHERS; FOR THE PERFECTING OF THE SAINTS, FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY, FOR THE EDIFYING OF THE BODY OF CHRIST: TILL WE ALL COME . . . UNTO A PERFECT MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.”
—*Eph. iv. 11-13.*

I AM, I believe, stating what most scholars agree to be the special purpose of this epistle when I say that it sets forth the character and purpose of the Christian Church. But while this is the tenor of the whole epistle—and there is hardly a verse which does not bear upon this—it seems to me that in our text we have an especially instructive and powerful concentration of the argument. Here, in one of those long and impassioned passages, rising into grand climax, which every master of eloquence knows so well to use, St. Paul gives energy and point to all he has been saying as to the nature and end of the Church. With the inborn humility of the truly great, and grounding his appeal, not on his authority and services, but rather on his helplessness, he asks his converts to sink all idea of difference and pride in the feeling of unity and the remembrance of the one Source from which every endowment, intellectual or religious, flows. Whatever gifts anyone enjoyed (and everyone had some

power for goodness), these were not only held for the good of the Church, but were derived immediately from her great Founder. It was He who gave to each man his place and work in life, and if He set some in various offices in the Church, it was neither that they might feel a superiority to others, nor attend to the improvement, spiritual or otherwise, of themselves, but rather that they should be the means of helping the whole Church forward in a nobler life, till at last, as the outcome and end of all our life and labour here, we should have an ennobled humanity, and attain to that perfect manhood of which we have in Christ at once the pattern and the promise.

We have, then, two great points before us—(1) The nature of the Church's life, and (2) The end of her activity.

Now, as to the first of these, it might seem as if I had wrongly taken the idea of the text, for if you look at the verse you will see that St. Paul is speaking of the various ecclesiastical officers, and it might appear that I should rather speak on the office of the ministry than on the wider subject of the life of the Church. But not only would I rather leave it to those who have greater experience and knowledge to speak on the duty of the ministry, but I hold I am justified in taking the subject as I have done, for here and elsewhere, as I have said, in this epistle it is the Church which is the subject of the Apostle's thought, and the ministry only comes in incidentally, as it were, and because of its relation to that larger life.

Now, what is the idea here presented to us of that life—what, in the Apostle's mind, is the nature of the Church? I am not, brethren, going to plunge into the arena of ecclesiastical discussion; even were it less profitless than it is, neither my duty nor my text would allow me to attempt it. To show which of many rival schemes of government and organization is the only one sanctioned by apostolical authority, and to leave ourselves with the complacent idea that we alone possess the true form of the Church, I leave this to those who are abler than I am to make a text prove anything they wish. And I doubt very much the wisdom of

going away with the notion that either in church government or anything else we are better than our neighbours. If what has been called a "divine discontent" be the best thing you can implant in a man, I see not how it can be otherwise than good for a church to believe that, after all, there may be many things in which it may attain to a more excellent way. These words of St. Paul do not, as I conceive, lend themselves to church controversialists at all. Here, brethren, we breathe a calmer, purer air than that of church courts. As when one leaves the noisy and dusty streets of some busy town and climbs some lofty hill, the sounds of bustling life below him die down to an almost unheard murmur, and the sight of the blue sky and the peaceful landscape makes him forget the petty strife and divisions of the market-place in the remembrance of the great ends of our common humanity, so here we are lifted out of the region of party church politics into a diviner air, and in the clear height at which this great Apostle moves, we see what is the true nature of the Church's universal life. That is supplied by the word "unity," one of the key-notes throughout this epistle. According to one conception in an earlier part, he sees the whole Church growing up in calm and harmonious beauty, as a living temple in which the Apostles and great leaders formed, as it were, the foundation, but in which every Christian, however humble, is present as a necessary stone. According to another, he sees men united in one loving family, of which Christ is the connecting soul.

But in our text this idea takes a more practical and individual application. No one, however gifted, is to separate himself in thought from the collective life. Each one is to see that his virtues are not self-derived, and that it is treason to humanity and to Christ to spend them on himself, or to refuse to let them flow forth for the service and use of others. If there were some gifted with great powers, or promoted to high offices in the Church, they existed but for the good of the whole, and the greater the power the more should be the service. He that was first was in this respect to make himself last. In Christ's own words, "he that was greatest

of all was to be servant of all." The idea of the Church was that of unity, in which no one could live his true life except as he lived in and for others.. And the higher and more powerful the individual life, the more must it realize this law of living in and with the life of all the rest.

Brethren, let us try to fix our thoughts on this idea of the Church. We are sometimes called on to adopt an attitude of defence. No one can know anything of the literature of our own time without being aware that in many quarters the Christian Church is assailed as an institution which, even if ever it was beneficial, has long outlived its usefulness; and to a less extent, and in a subordinate degree, the Christian ministry is decied as a body of men whose services are only hurtful. I know not any other justification or defence we can plead than the idea of the text. If the Church be what that describes her, if the ministry be what that enjoins, they need no apology beyond their existence—their life is their defence. Has there ever been a nobler ideal anywhere presented in the long history of man than this of the Christian Church? Recollect in what a condition of the world the Church had its origin. The unimpeachable witness of the heathen historians and poets and satirists of the time remains to tell us what the condition of civilized society then was. Slavery, unredeemed by compassion; superstition that ministered only to fear, and vice; degraded poverty, or a still more degrading pauperism; amusements in which the excess of cruelty and murder made their sport—this was the condition of the poor. Scepticism, alternating with the lowest credulity; want of all private virtue and family duty; the ideal of enjoyment, the most prolonged sensual excesses—this made the life of the rich. The nations had been bound together in an external unity by the Roman conquests; but not only was there no real international regard, but individual patriotism was all but dead; each lived but for himself, and truth and honour and love seemed to have fled the earth or to be remembered only to be scorned.

In such an hour the Christian Church had its birth, and while it comprehended all within its scope, knowing no dis-

tion of race, and having slaves for the majority of its members, it recognized as the law of its being that each should not only not live all his life for himself, but that he should find his true existence in living the larger life of the brotherhood. I need not, for I could not, tell how that life went on through the centuries. I need not say how, through what Milton grandly calls "the irresistible might of weakness," the Church grew and prevailed. I need not remind you of her glorious but peaceful victories; how she freed the slave, stopped the brutalizing sports of the arena, raised woman from the slave of man's passions to be his companion and friend; how she again made a home for the family, again made private virtue to be respected and public faith be kept, taught rulers their submission to a higher Ruler, and for a time drove superstition and scepticism to their native darkness. If, again and again, the Church seemed to have forgotten her ideal, if she who freed the slave imposed a worse slavery on the mind and soul, if she who released the gladiator, lighted for seekers after truth the cruel bonfire, let it not be forgotten that into the society of the Church had been gathered great masses who never learned or shared her spirit, and that when the Reformation came it was that inner spirit that prompted the nobler life, as it had never ceased to struggle for it. Even now, brethren, what other society presents such a lofty ideal, an ideal felt among great masses of men, and ever being anew manifested in noblest fashion in those whom all revere. Look not at the faults and errors of the Church which are not rightly hers, for they are continually being condemned and corrected by this her inmost spirit; but look just at this idea she is continually realizing more and more, the conception she alone has been able to give birth to and sustain, of a better and nobler human society, in which all men should be bound together in true and lofty brotherhood, in which "all men's good should be each man's rule," and in which the spirit and life of Christ should be renewed in each separate life and be the animating spirit of the whole human race. And if I say one word as to the ministry, I do not,

brethren, speak from any professional point of view, but only to complete my argument and my exposition of the text. No class or order of men stand less in need of an apology, though, if such were to be offered, it would better come from other than a young recruit. It needs not that cavillers should point to the degraded priests of the dark ages, or to the faithless pastors of modern days, it is the ministry itself which has formed and hurled the keenest rebuke at the head of such offenders, it is the outraged spirit of the ministry which sits heaviest on their soul. Here, as in all human societies, we must distinguish between the individual and the institution. It is the office of the ministry, and not its representatives, we are to justify. But surely in a Scottish church, and to a Scottish Congregation, that justification is superfluous. We must deny well-nigh every noble name in our history, we must forget every institution which has advanced the national life, we must wipe out some of the proudest pages in our records, we must unlearn our civil freedom, we must cease to respect the piety and purity of home, ere it will be possible for us to owe no debt and to acknowledge no admiration to those who bore the name of Christian ministers.

But now, for the purposes of our text, the ministry and the Church are one. Even those most highly and peculiarly endowed with authority and power, the Apostles themselves, only existed as members of the Church more highly gifted than the rest, and because more highly gifted, therefore more specially devoted to the service and use of others. If the Christian ministry are set apart from their brethren in the Church, it is only that there may be intensified in them that spirit and service which is common to all. From them is expected and required a higher Christian knowledge and a nobler Christian life, and a more complete and constant endeavour to realize that in serving others is the only true and Christian existence. If they fail in this, they fail in everything, and there is no justification for their being. But there is no sacerdotal exclusiveness in the office of the ministry, there is nothing deeper than an official difference

between them and their fellows. You, brethren, are each one of you in the truest sense of the word ministers too. You are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and of your brethren. Your true life is impossible for you unless you live a wider and nobler life than self. What the Protestant Church wants now as a Second Reformation is just the making living and real this great truth, that every Christian man is really and truly a king and priest to God—that each Christian soul is here and now called and consecrated to a life-ministry. We threw down the tyranny of the priesthood, and declared that no human authority should interfere between the soul and its God; but we need now to be delivered from the too prevalent idea that an official minister is alone called to that life of consecration and service which Christ Himself lays on each single soul, and which forms the inmost spirit and abiding nature of the Universal Church.

I have spoken so long on the nature of the Church's life that it only remains to point, in a single word, to the end of her activity. Thank God that end is given in words which we believe to be instinct with divine truth, and no mere uncertain dream and fond imagination of man. It is as if for a moment that Mighty Spirit which moves the history of man, before whom the generations rise and flee away as wave follows wave on the deep, and to whose far glance the lapse of a thousand years are but as the passing of a single day, had, to the rapt vision of the apostle, withdrawn the veil which hides the future issue of man's long history and enabled him to see "that one, far off, divine event to which the whole creation moves." Or, it is as if, like another Moses near the close of his career, the Spirit of God had taken this latter Prophet up to a loftier Pisgah, where he could see the glories of that promised land of which he was the pioneer, but which he himself was not to enter. This vision of the latter days, this outcome of all earnest endeavour, this end and goal of the Church's activity, is nothing less than a perfected humanity. The purpose of all Christian life, from the inspired teaching of an apostle to the simple

obedience of a child, is that "we should all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." No Christian Church, no Christian man, dare set up a lower or narrower end than this. Oh, faithless that we are, how often we have done this—taken a flower when God had given us a world! We have sought to save ourselves though others perished; or to save their souls, leaving mind and body to brute and devil. Or we have sought for heaven, willing to leave earth a hell; to make pure the Church, while society fell down to Mammon and Belial, to lust and gold! Surely a better day has come. Surely in the writings of those who lead the thought of the Church and the world, in the new aspirations that are moving the hearts of men, in the shamed silence which has fallen on the noblest in all the Churches at our pitiful divisions and quarrels, we may see the Spirit of Christ calling us to the true purpose and end of Christianity. And, brethren, in the circumstances in which we meet to-day, as a congregation and a presbytery (for I do not disguise that I have had these in view all along, as, indeed, I conceived it my duty to have), in the new tie that is being formed to-day between you and your minister, in the new fellow-worker who is associated with us to-day, there is surely not one of us so unsympathetic as not to be touched with earnest and solemn thought. Surely this is a time, if any, when it is impossible not to ask ourselves the meaning and purpose alike of the Christian Church and Christian ministry. I ask your forgiveness, I ask the forgiveness of my brethren, if in anything I have spoken with the ignorance or presumption of youth. But I feel I should have been untrue to the office given me here to-day did I not try to place before you that ideal which God has given to be the constant and guiding aspiration of congregations and ministers. I have somewhere read of an artist who kept ever before him in his studio one of the great pictures of a departed teacher; and I have read of at least one great author who, in the intervals of study and writing, would take from his shelves his favourite

volume, saying, "Give me the master." Before each of us at our life's labour, may this divine picture constantly shine. In our intervals of work, when we rest either from gladness or sorrow, may this great promise of the Book of God cheer our heart with the hope of a "new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"

XXV.

THE NECESSITY OF A MISSIONARY SPIRIT
IN EVERY CHRISTIAN.

"I WAS AN HUNGERED, AND YE GAVE ME NO MEAT: I WAS THIRSTY, AND YE GAVE ME NO DRINK: I WAS A STRANGER, AND YE TOOK ME NOT IN: NAKED AND YE CLOTHED ME NOT: SICK, AND IN PRISON, AND YE VISITED ME NOT."—*Matt. xxv. 42-43.*

THE meaning of these words of Christ is sufficiently clear. They tell us what kind of spirit we must possess, what sorts of actions we must have performed, if we are not to find ourselves shut out in the future life from the blessedness of the saints of God. It is clear from this parable (and even our own experience of life, is, of itself, sufficient to show us this) that a man may make a zealous outward profession of Christianity without being penetrated with its real spirit, that one may even be placed in high office in the Church, and be accepted among his fellows as its representative and exponent, of whom it is yet true that he has so little of the spirit of its Divine Founder and Master that Christ has never known him. And it is not too much to say that it is the clear and explicit teaching of the parable that every one is in this case—or, at least, has perilously approached to it—in whose bosom the spirit of pity does not dwell; who has not, in some measure at least,

"A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize:"

who has not, to some extent, made an endeavour to lighten the load of human suffering. It is not, however, the teaching of this parable, and it is certainly not the teaching of Scripture generally, that all that is required in order to being religious is a certain degree of sympathy with misfortune, that the one sufficient test of a Christian man is the absence of a callous indifference to the sufferings of others. If it were

so, I need hardly say, very few would fail to meet with entire acquittal in the judgment, for there are few so hardened as not to be ready to sympathize with evident pain. This ready surface good-nature is present in almost all men, it may even come from a selfish anticipation of our own lot, and it is certainly quite compatible not only with entire absence of anything specially religious in the character, but it may even be found in men of notoriously wicked and immoral life.

The text on which Christ lays so much stress is not this easy, passing emotion, which costs us nothing, it is that of active and persistent beneficence. It is not feeling a thrill of unavoidable sympathy with the first apparent sufferer we meet on the highway, and who, after all, may be an impostor; it is not shedding idle tears over a thrilling newspaper story of calamity which we have no call to share; it is that spirit of practical self-denial which seeks to relieve the sorrow of those who meet us in the path of daily duty; it is the cheerful surrender of some part of our time, or money, or inclination, to make the lives of others less dreary; and all this, not as a matter of fitful emotion, but as a deep and regular principle in our life. In short, brethren, unless the doing of good, the work of active kindness, the habit of befriending and assisting others less fortunate than ourselves, be wrought into the texture of our lives, be what we regularly give up some of our activity to, we are not, according to this parable, entitled to hold ourselves Christian in any real sense at all. We cannot try ourselves too closely and jealously by this test, if we only bear two things in mind by way of caution, so as not to make a wrong use of it.

First, remember you cannot force yourself into the habit of doing kindness by the wish and endeavour to make up, as it were, a sufficient quantity of good works. This is the old legal spirit of self-righteousness condemned by St. Paul, and requiring again to be burst asunder as an intolerable yoke at the Reformation. The goodness so produced, brethren, would never be real, it would be half-hearted and affected, always glancing aside from the

kindness it was doing to the reward it was earning; and so neither making humble one's own spirit, nor bringing a really helpful sympathy to the spirit of others. All Christian doing of good—all really helpful beneficence—must be, to a certain extent, un-self-conscious; it must spring, that is, from some deep and genuine feeling in the heart, prompting us irresistibly to charity and help. In one word, our beneficence must be the outcome of Christian faith and love and hope—the feeling of St. Paul, “the love of Christ constraineth us,” must be in some measure our prompting motive.

And, in the second place, we must not tie ourselves to hard and fast rules as to the form in which our Christian philanthropy is to work. If we seek to confine ourselves to a literal application of the words of Christ, we shall probably utterly lose their spirit. Directly and literally, simply to feed the hungry would, to many people, only mean to give help to the unworthy, and to try to do ill what the Poor Law can do much better; to give drink to the thirsty is, in our climate, hardly a necessity at all; to clothe the naked is, again, a matter better overtaken by Parochial and other societies; while to visit the imprisoned is, to all but a very few, inadvisable. Are we then to conclude there is no law of charity binding upon us? does this test wholly fail? and having done nothing, may we triumphantly claim its approval on the plea that the work enjoined was already, all of it, being attended to? Certainly not. In this, and in other places in Scripture, it is not a narrow literal fulfilment which is to be sought, but the acceptance of the spirit of the command; and if we have a willing anxiety to obey, it is astonishing how close we may come to fulfilling it even in the letter. If, instead of the special cases stated by Christ, we put the general principle underlying these words, you will see how the possibility and necessity of this test devolves at once on every one; no one anywhere can be without the means of accomplishing something. Sympathy and help in suffering, active kindness to others, self-denial that another's pain may be

lessened, readiness to see privation, and sorrow, and willingness to feel with it and relieve it—does not this sum up the law of Christian charity in all ages, and are not the opportunities for manifesting it simply infinite? He who feels for a child's sorrow over a broken toy, and seeks to rouse the little one to mirth—he who pities the solitude of an old woman in her lonely garret, and tries to cheer it—he who at home checks the passionate and hasty word, though his temper be sorely tried, because it would wound another's feelings—these are all fulfilling the law of Christian goodness not less, though it may be in a lesser degree, than those who found an hospital or give a dinner to the poor.

The great and essential point, brethren, is that we be in possession of a truly Christian temper and heart, and that we try to exercise these habitually—make them give colour and shape to our daily life. And, believe me, there is not an hour almost in which we will not find opportunity for using them, not a day in which we may not be living out that manner of life on which alone Christ here stamps His approval. And I cannot urge upon you too strongly to begin at home with this divinest charity. Let it come constantly into your daily work, however humble and even coarse that may be. Let this spirit sweeten your tempers and refine your manners to true gentleness; let it make you quick to see the wants and sorrows of others, and ready to give them a ready and helpful sympathy; let it create and deepen in you a true self-denial, so that you will more and more come to think how your conduct and life are affecting others, and not only, or chiefly, how they gratify yourself; and then, brethren, you will not need to fear this searching test of Christ. In communion with Him, in dependence on His Spirit, you will be able to follow, though at a long distance, His own holy and beneficent life, till at last you receive His approval, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

And now, brethren, I turn aside from the general enforcement of my text to one particular application of it—I make what doubtless some of you think should be the end of my

sermon the occasion of a new beginning ; and yet I feel I am in strictest conformity with my text when I proceed, as I now do, to urge on you the necessity of a missionary spirit in every Christian. At first sight my text may appear to have nothing to do with this—or even, perhaps, you may think it actually opposed to it. Does not, you may say, the text urge on us practical help to those who are near to us, and with whom we personally come in contact? and how can I then speak of help to those whom we never saw, and who are thousands of miles away? Does not the text speak of relieving actual physical and social suffering in our midst, not of sending theoretical enlightenment to distant regions? It is just because of this apparent contradiction I have selected my text ; it is just because I hope to show you how utterly false is this common opposition of Home Evangelization and Foreign Missions—of active Christian kindness at home, and an interest in the heathen abroad—that I speak on the subject to-day.

Brethren, there is not only no opposition between doing good here at home and sending the gospel abroad, but they are one and the same thing, and I have ventured to call them by one name, namely—the possession of a missionary spirit. We require for practical church purposes to separate our Home and Foreign Missions, but not only is the spirit which works in them one, but the work itself is really the same. Suppose you have a friend who lives in your own house with you, and another, equally dear, who lives thousands of miles away across the Atlantic—is it not the one love you feel to them? If you are hard to the one, will you not probably be hard to both? If both are dependent on your charity for aid, on your kindness for making life sweet to them, will you not exhibit the one character to both, and either fail or be faithful equally as that inclines? Or will not a man who acknowledges the great law of Christian kindness and self-denial, equally exhibit it at home and when travelling a thousand miles away? He does not become another man or act in a different way because he is in a different place—the law of doing good is

not bound by geographical limits. I grant at once, brethren, a man's chief and special duties lie very near him. Those whom you meet habitually, and who are almost never from your company, and to whom you are bound by closest ties—these have the greatest claim upon you because your debt of duty to them is the largest. Your goodness and religion must be shown chiefly at home, because it is at home you chiefly are. If you are not religious at home, you certainly cannot be religious elsewhere—a home heathen is only a street saint outwardly or by pretence. But is religion never to go beyond home? Are we never to do good except to the narrowest circle in which we live? Surely not! I believe it must begin there, but it should not end there—nay, the words of the Parable assure us it must not end there. Christian kindness cannot end at home, if it be there at all. A missionary spirit, brethren, means just exactly what is described in the text—that is, a disposition to go out in friendly sympathy and help to those whose lot is very hard; and I am confident there is no one in such circumstances as to make it absolutely impossible for his thoughts, at least, to travel out beyond the sphere of home.

Now, of that great suffering world which lies outside of us, and makes an appeal to our help and sympathy by its very existence, I speak to-day of that which is not only by far the largest part, but which has also, in some respects, the most pressing claims upon us. Do not think for a moment I wish to dry up any spring of charity here at home, but I am stating a plain fact when I say that, as a country, we are immensely rich, and there is enough charity already existent, if it were well distributed, to meet and supply every case of deserving want, while the very law provides that no one shall be denied food or shelter or medicine who cares to ask it.

Let me remind you, in conclusion, brethren, that all around the comfortable homes of our country, all around this peaceful society of ours, in which, if it were well arranged and distributed, there is abundance for every one, there is a

dark world—counting its hundreds of millions, and these are our fellow-creatures, nay, the brethren of our very Lord—which is in literal hunger and sickness very often, and altogether in that most dreadful darkness and hunger of soul which must be where there is not the smallest glimpse of the hope and peace of Christ.

O! brethren, what if the sentence be already gone forth from the judgment seat of the Most High against our country and our Church? What if Christ already have said, "I gave you all the heart could desire. I set you in safety and freedom in the inviolate sea. I bestowed on you the largest empire and dominion ever given to man. I endowed you with ample wealth, your commerce covered every sea. Above all, I gave you a pure religion; I taught you its supreme value, for all your national power and glory was rooted in it. And yet, when those who belonged even to your own empire, and furnished your own wealth, when the heathen millions besought you from their darkness and hopelessness to send them the blessings of your light and peace, you turned but a deaf ear. You stinted no luxury even to save those who were dying of the worst hunger. You built splendid temples to Me, you sung My praises, though in Mine ears they rung like blasphemy, for these you left to perish, and yet they were not only Mine, they were Myself—for I live over again in every child of misery; and 'inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it not to *Me*.' Yes, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not.' I was hungering for the Bread of Life—you never gave it; I was thirsting for Salvation—you never sent it; I was a stranger—ye took Me not into the fold and home of the Church; I was sick of a thousand diseases in body and soul, I was in the dark prison of heathen despair—and ye never visited Me!"

Brethren, have I said too much? No! I appeal to facts to justify me. It is less than a hundred years since the

first missionary society was formed in England. It is within the present century that the first missionary to the heathen left Scotland. We were heathen once ourselves—ay, not so very long ago. Little more than a thousand years ago, we were almost as hopeless savages as any for whom I now plead. We were indebted then to strangers for our Christianity. And even now, when the public conscience has been quickened; even now, when some of the saintliest and most Christ-like souls have toiled so earnestly, as if they had to atone singly for our criminal ease; even now, when we have had such glorious names as those of Livingstone and Duff to encourage and shame us into zeal, what have we done? Last year, the members of our own Church, on one class of luxury alone, spent over ten millions of pounds, while they gave little over twenty thousands to missions. Brethren, do not think I care to be pleading for money. It is a wretched thing to be talking of it continually in the Church of God, and nothing can be more degrading than to have to measure a Church's piety by her pence. One of the greatest missionaries the world ever saw, said, "silver and gold have I none;" the one offering marked by open divine approval was less than a farthing. It is not our money God wants, but our hearts; it is not for a missionary collection I plead, but for a missionary spirit. Let there be devotion to Christ, and love to man, and the world will be converted; without this, the most splendid offerings are worse than vain. But there must be some outward evidence. Love that never gives is no love. The spirit that shows no outward token of life is already dead. What measure of life and love is it in the church of Scotland, think you, when each member gives less than half a farthing per Sunday to save the heathen. I do not ask for money only, no, nor even chiefly; not at all. If you give because you are compelled to give, because you feel shamed into it, because you wish to save the credit of your Church, then better a thousand times keep it, it would be false coin in the treasury of God. What I plead for to-day, what I feel deeply I should be utterly faithless to my solemn office if I failed to say, what I am constrained to utter if I am to

speak the truth of God, is just this—it is the inescapable lesson of my text—there must be a missionary spirit in the soul or there is no Christian life. Live for others—live especially for the poor and the distressed—go forth in your sympathy and help to all in darkness and sorrow; and, if so, you cannot fail to remember the heathen world. You will give to them your prayers, and what Christian requires to be told that is the most precious offering of all? If we were all a praying church, the walls of heathendom would fall as quickly and certainly as those of Jericho before the shouting Israelites. And then you will give your money cheerfully; nay, you will learn the only noble way of giving, you will deny yourself that you may give. Oh, what a small sacrifice it would need to make even the poorest member of our church give a shilling a year for foreign missions! for winning the heathen to Christ! and yet that small sacrifice would, as our report tells you, more than double our mission income! No offering is worth anything that costs us nothing. To give out of our superfluity is no religious service. Ah, if we were all only to deny ourselves a little for Christ's sake, how easily might our mission funds be twentyfold increased. Oh, if we could but realize what only one heathen life means—the darkness, the despair, the brutality, the hopeless sorrow, the degradation of soul, that may be crowded into even a single existence—and then see, as we might well do, the Spirit of Christ pointing to that one, and saying, “There stands not merely My brother, but Myself;” “inasmuch ye do it not to one of the least of these My brethren, ye do it not to Me.” And then, let that scene be repeated, not by millions, but as it really is, by hundreds of millions of heathen lives, and which of us can be deaf to the loud cry rung in our ears, “Give, oh give us

“The Gospel's glorious hope,
 Its robe of purity, its eye of prayer,
 Its feet of firmness on temptation's steep,
 Its bark that sinks not 'mid the storm of Death!”

XXVI.

THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES.

A sermon for All Saints' Day.

“WE ALSO ARE COMPASSED ABOUT WITH SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES.”

—*Heb. xii. 1.*

ALMOST every one is agreed as to the thought which prompted these words. It was the special mission and aim of the inspired writer of this epistle to strengthen his fellow-countrymen and fellow-believers in their Christianity. They were exposed to many dangers. On the one hand, they were beset by those who sought to lead them back into their former Judaism, which must still have had a power over them of old association; and, on the other hand, they were being already persecuted for their new faith, and might yet have to meet the extremity of death if they did not abandon it. Situated thus between two fires—the old faith seeking to win them back by presenting all that was fair and attractive in it, and the new drawing down on those who embraced it the scorn and violence of the powerful—well might these poor Hebrews feel the need of some strengthening and encouraging voice. And such was the splendid trumpet-blast which God through His servant sent them in this epistle. Beginning with an assertion of the transcendent excellence of that Christ whom their new faith taught them to believe in, it showed how all that was best in their old faith had been not only realized in Him, but had been raised and ennobled; the old had not been lost, but taken up and glorified in the new. That Jesus, who was all to them, was Himself the substance of which the law had only been the shadow. And they were not to be frightened and driven back from this glorious religion by trials, for Jesus,

their Captain and Leader, had Himself suffered sorely, even to death. Though the whole world seemed arrayed against them, they must hold fast their good profession. They, as Hebrews, least of all should faint because they could not show they were right, because their vindication and success lay in the far-off and unseen future. For that history of which, as Jews, they were so proud—the great and noble deeds of the Old Testament—were not all these done by men who, like themselves, were only strong in faith; who were divided by others; who were alone, but for God; who had to seal their testimony always by suffering, oftentimes by death? Then follows that memorable catalogue of the worthies of the Old Testament—that stirring eleventh chapter so well called the muster-roll of the heroes of faith. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, one after another the noble endurance of their lives is told.

As one deeply versed in the Scriptures, and speaking to those who knew and loved them well, he catches fire as he goes on, and name after name, memory after memory, rises before him. They crowd so thick and fast upon him that he can no longer mention them—the heroes of whom they might have heard their fathers speak, who met the sword and flame and horrible torture and never flinched. Then, as he speaks, he seems to think of that illustrious host as like the great crowd of spectators that filled some of these vast Roman amphitheatres, gazing down on the combatants below. And as he thinks on the past life of the Church of God, and the mighty host who had been faithful through suffering and persecution, he calls out in an exultant and encouraging outburst to his threatened and somewhat terrified fellow-believers to take courage and hope from that great throng that beheld them. “See you not,” he seems to say, how “we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses!”

Let me try to present to your thought to-day, brethren, the place and value this great truth has for the Christian soul—that we, each one, are compassed by the great cloud of God’s witnesses.

First, look at the new importance it should give to the life of the very humblest. Some of those to whom the Apostle wrote were actually slaves—their market value would probably have been less than a horse in the Roman capital; a piece of china sometimes sold for a price that would have bought hundreds of these human cattle. And yet, over a life so infinitely worthless and despised—over this piece of mere live furniture, whose very name his unregarding master and owner did not know—this great evangelist seems to see, hanging in a living crowd, watching in breathless eagerness, the glorious host of the unnumbered saints of God! As in those games for which some splendid amphitheatre, often accommodating many thousands, stood in almost every ancient city, the combatant, as he looked up from the arena below, saw the great sea of human faces above him all around, forming in the distance over him, as it were, a vast cloud, so the meanest Christian slave and outcast, as he might be, was in reality surrounded, as by some bright luminous cloud, with the numerous host of those who, having fought the battles of God, had reached the place of victory—the very least of them “was compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.”

Let us apply this same truth to ourselves. Lower than those Hebrew Christians, many of them were, none of us can be. Most of us have at least a higher station and greater influence than they—and we, like them, are compassed by the cloud of God’s witnesses. What raised and ennobled their life should then be effective in us too. For, brethren, they were important, these congregations of slaves, though counted the mere off-scourings and refuse of society. Here, as everywhere, the world’s estimate was utterly wrong, the view of faith was right. We look back across those nineteen centuries, and who of that far-off time is it that we remember and admire? Not those whom the men of those ages esteemed great and powerful. We read the history of the Roman emperors, but it is with scorn and loathing. Even their great writers, their famed philosophers, we in many points rightly disparage and condemn. But we turn

with sincerest love and gratitude, we offer our noblest admiration and thanks, to that scanty yet noble band, almost all nameless and unknown save to God, who, by their pure lives, by their constancy, unmoved even in torture and death, by their self-sacrifice and Christian faith, really turned the course of the world's history and became, under God, the instruments of that civilization and peace and goodness we now enjoy. Had they failed, had even one of them turned aside (for what one did might not others also do) the fortunes of Christianity, and with it of humanity, might have been lost, and the very salvation of the world might, as far as human instrumentality goes, have been altogether missed. Can we wonder, therefore—is it not rather most natural and true—that the Apostle should represent all God's departed saints, who themselves had laboured and suffered for the world's salvation, as bending in eager and rapt attention and interest over the battlefield, where these early Christians were striving for Christ and man? And it is so with us. What these ages were to ourselves, we are to those that follow. Over us, too, broods the white cloud of God's redeemed, spectators of our life's battle. Not one of us is unregarded, not one of us is esteemed as too unimportant to be the object of utmost solicitude; and we cannot tell how much may depend on the life's performance of the very humblest and least gifted.

In our last war with China it so happened that an English soldier fell into the hands of the enemy. He was commanded to prostrate himself before their authorities, but though he was only a poor private, and though some Indian soldiers taken along with him at once obeyed, he felt he would be dishonouring his country and his flag and nobly refused. The threat of death failed to move him; the dream of home and friends could not shake his proud and patriotic resolve—

"No, honour calls! with strength like steel
 He put the vision by,
 Let dusky Indians whine and kneel.
 An English lad must die.

And thus, with eyes that would not shrink,—
 With knee to man unbent,
 Unflinching on its dreadful brink,
 To his red grave he went."

Now here we see a man of no importance, as it were, a mere common soldier, one out of thousands, suddenly called upon, and almost without warning elevated into a place of highest moment. His country's honour depends on him, the eyes of the civilized world are really upon him, and it was no poetic exaggeration when it was sung of him by a great English writer—

"To let his name through Europe ring,
 A man of mean estate ;
 Who died as firm as Sparta's king,
 Because his soul was great."

And in the great army of Christ, brethren, it often happens likewise. It was the story—the true story, I believe,—of a poor Christian slave's life in America that more surely overthrew the abomination of negro slavery there than the mighty hosts of the Federal army. It was the Christian prayer and resolve of a poor Northampton shoemaker that set agoing our modern Christian missions, which now embrace an army of five thousand missionaries and over a million of converts, and are slowly but surely changing the entire fortunes of the world. A child's voice converted the great Saint Augustine, perhaps the ablest and most devoted man since the days of the Apostles, and a writer whose influence is still powerful fifteen hundred years after he has gone. I cannot tell what influence for untold ages may be slumbering in the soul even of the very humblest and weakest here; but one thing I do know, that God can use, and often does use, the most apparently feeble instruments to do a mighty work, and that in His eyes there is no one who is of no use, nay, that so momentous are the issues that hang on the Christian life of every baptized child of God, so great and solemn are its responsibilities and power for good or evil, for aiding or hindering the work of Christ,

that the very departed saints are hanging over it as a mighty crowd of watchers. "We, every one of us, are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses!"

2. But, brethren, if there is a solemn and almost warning lesson for us in the importance which our text assigns to the life of each one here—if the message it brings us is that it is an awful thing to throw away, as a careless trifle, a life whose issues is so grandly watched—there is also a lesson of highest encouragement and noblest hope in the thought that "we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." I cannot tell in what precise sense we may understand these words. I see nothing to forbid the thought that the vast host of God's saints may be altogether cognisant of what goes on in the earthly struggle where they fought so well. I cannot reject the saying of our noblest poet,

"Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth unseen,
Both when we sleep and when we wake."

I know, as the surest teaching of our faith, that those whom we call dead are those who are more greatly and truly alive; and reason as well as religion tells me that an essentially spiritual being is elevated above the limits and restraints of the senses. Unseen but real influences for good are doubtless flowing from the spiritual watchers of man's struggling life. Heaven may often be very near to earth. The cause or the soul that was dearer than life to one who has now joined the host of the redeemed, it would be impossible to think of as separated from its solicitude and its prayer, simply because the soul which loved it has passed into the better world. I know our prayers should only be addressed to God, and that the Heavenly Father is Himself the Watcher, and Lover, and Saviour of each soul that acknowledges itself His child; but surely it should add a further thrill of encouragement and hope to know that the whole family of God who are in heaven regard with intensest solicitude those members of it still on the earth. But there is one sure lesson of encouragement as to which there cannot

be even a shadow of doubt. The witnesses of God of whom the text speaks are witnesses in a double sense. They are not mere spectators, spiritual and unseen, of our life, but they themselves when on earth were witnesses for God, or (for it is the same word) God's martyrs. And in this sense, brethren, what a lesson of encouragement and hope is there for us here! The saints and heroes of God—what a countless and illustrious throng! It recalls the scene in the apocalypse, when St. John gazes on a vast host of white gleaming spirits—this very same cloud that compasses us—and to the question, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?" the answer comes, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and they are "a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues." Oh, when we think on the countless good and noble men and women, those whom the Bible tells of—those whom history delights to record—those whose biographies we ourselves have read—those whom in actual life we have been privileged to know and love—what a summons comes to us from those innumerable saintly and true lives—what a scathing rebuke they offer to our false and weak, our discontented and selfish, existence.

Oh, brethren, put it from you as the worst and vilest lie of the devil, which whispers sometimes in your heart—

"Virtue? to be good and just?
Every heart, when lifted well,
Is a clot of warmer dust,
Mixed with cunning sparks of Hell!"

Believe it not, unless you would make yourself one with those who committed the unpardonable sin and blasphemed the Holy Christ Himself by sneering, "He casts out devils only by Beelzebub!" Rather on this, the first Sunday after that day which, in a great part of Christendom, is specially associated with the memory of the saintly departed, should

we take up the language of a living poet who has earned a just title as an acute reader of human character—

“One feast, of holy days the crest,
 I, though no churchman, love to keep.
All saints—the unknown good that rest
 In God’s still memory folded deep :
 The bravely dumb that did their deed,
 And scorned to blot it with a name ;
 Men of the plain heroic creed
 Who loved Heaven’s silence more than fame.

“Such lived not in the past alone,
 But thread to-day the unheeding street,
 And stairs to sin and famine known,
 Sing with the welcome of their feet :
 The den they enter grows a shrine,
 The grimy sash an oriel burns,
 Their cup of water warms like wine,
 Their speech is filled from heavenly urns.”

Of this be sure, that the multitude of these is all but infinite—each station, each calling, nay, each family almost, has had some saintly and beautified life, some one who, with almost no accomplishments, perhaps possessed of no resources of money or power, condemned it may be to almost entire uselessness by some cruel illness, or carrying within the heart some secret and crushing sorrow, has yet lived here as a very angel of God and ministering spirit of goodness, and when it has gone away from the sight has been enshrined for ever in the memory, the one sacredest spot in the heart, the thought of which is powerful through long years, not only to touch with a healing sorrow, but to nerve to a holy resolve, many an otherwise careless or sinful life. If there is one lesson the memory of God’s saints teaches us, it is the power for goodness that lies in the very poorest life. Less than many of these were in position, in gifts, in opportunities no one here can possibly be ; greater than they became we can hardly even aspire.

The grandest words of praise I ever read on any monu-

ment, and they seemed to me the most true and touching, was the inscription in the churchyard of my former parish, over the grave of one I had never otherwise heard of—the words of a son on his mother—"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you!" Nobler words of praise and love I never read, and yet they are such as the very humblest here may earn—a priceless treasure each friend may leave with friend. And I beseech you, brethren, by your own sacred remembrances of the departed—by every noble life that has even once touched yours—by the great cloud of God's witnesses that now encompass you—by the greatness of your own life, which is a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men—lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset you, and, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith, strive to live an earnest, pure, high-toned, brave, and unselfish Christian life—be a follower of the saints of God who, by their faith and endurance, now inherit the promises—become yourself a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light—leave, like them, a memory and an influence that will still be sweet and treasured when all else of your earthly existence shall have mouldered into dust.

"Oh, though oft depressed and lonely,
 All our fears are laid aside;
 If we but remember only,
 Such as these have lived and died!"

XXVII.

THE FADING LEAF.

“WE ALL DO FADE AS A LEAF.”—*Isaiah lxiv. 6.*

EVERYONE is familiar with the words of our great dramatist in which he makes the exiled Duke boast that he can find—

“Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones ;”

and at this season surely even the thoughtless must feel that they need enter no church, nor listen to any preacher's voice, when along every highway they tread the voice of every wind that blows seems to speak of the mutability of all human things, and to re-echo the old words of the prophet—“We all do fade as a leaf.”

It is by a natural law of our being that we find something human in everything around us. Man has not merely subdued the earth, and made himself lord and master of it in a material sense ; he has dominated it in its spiritual aspect, and turned all its sights and shows to spiritual uses, infused into them a portion of his own soul, and made us feel it impossible to look on any part of the Universe as mere dead matter, but rather as something able to move and touch us with something of human and spiritual fellow-feeling.

Who of us, for example, can look on the sea and perceive no more than a mere mass of fluid matter ? It is impossible even to the dullest ! When we think of its storms and calms ; how it now glasses itself in the sunshine, and again darkens into the fury of the gale ; when we think how far it extends, and how long it has rolled ; when we recall the ceaseless moan of its ebb and flow, alike on the coast alive

with traffic, and on the desert strand where only the sea-bird mocks it, it is impossible for us to think of it except as full of human suggestiveness—we even speak of it, both in poetry and common language, as alive, calling it *she*, not *it*, and recognise the beautiful truth of the words—

“Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow,
Such as Creation’s dawn beheld, thou rollest now.”

Who of us dares to think of the sky as mere ether; of the stars simply as burning matter; of the hills as mere heaps of rock and earth? In spite of all that Science can tell, these things still remain to us great with a certain spiritual power; and not merely in poetry, but even in common life, they move and touch with almost human tenderness. It may be only a poet who is able to say

“The meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears,”

but in times of quiet thought we all have felt how the common things of earth can touch the deepest chords of memory or hope, and stir us to a happy gladness, or hardly less pleasing melancholy.

So, too, in spite of all the disenchantment of Science and the deadening force of custom, how does the recurrence of the seasons still touch and fill the heart! Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter—these are not merely different conditions of the physical earth prompting different occupations for man, they will ever have a certain spiritual suggestiveness.

How strangely persistent in all human language, how deeply fixed in the human heart, is the thought which identifies the four seasons with the four ages of man. Look how, even in ordinary language, we have transferred the epithets from the one to the other. We speak of “smiling spring” and “budding childhood.” We talk of “lusty summer” and “flowering youth.” We speak of “sober autumn” and “ripe manhood.” We talk of “pale winter” and “hoary age.” And so it can never be unfitting or improper in the Christian preacher to avail himself of this

correspondence between the outward world and man, and to follow the example of the Bible itself in making the course of the year preach a sermon to the human soul.

What lessons, then, are there for us, my brethren, in the season which we so fitly denominate "the falling of the leaf?" What is the force and meaning to us of the prophet's words—"We all do fade as a leaf?"

First then, the text and the season alike impress on us the sense of failure and sin. It is in this sense that the words are first used by the prophet. He is overwhelmed, despondent, almost in despair, at the thought of their sinfulness as a nation—"But we are all an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." When he thinks on the possibilities that lay before them, the grandeur of the destiny that called them, the high aspirations that were kindled, the lofty resolves for goodness that burned, and then thinks on the poor performance—how the very good deeds they had done were so poor in comparison with their high resolves, that they were as unsightly rags compared to a seamless robe—then it seems as if all their holy aspirations and bright hopes had faded like the fading of a leaf; and as the wind drives the dead leaves before it, so had their iniquities scattered their purposes of goodness away.

And what comparison, my brethren, could be more apt? Look at a leaf in spring—how beautiful and fresh it is in its early green, as it unfolds from its protecting sheath, and how resolutely it clings to the tree which it adorns, however roughly the winds may blow; and then look at the same thing in autumn—a withered, lifeless thing, all its beauty gone, driven before the wind, and falling helplessly on the roadway, where the careless foot of the first traveller will obliterate it in the mire. Is not this a symbol to us of our own failure and sin? We start in life full of high hopes and aims. We will keep ourselves unspotted from the world; we will know nothing of its meannesses, its lying, its selfishness, its impurities, its criminal pleasures.

Life will be to us a noble battle-field, and we will quit ourselves as knights, without fear and without reproach. But how soon does this light of youthful innocence and holy resolve fade away! We sink down to the world's low level—if we do not fall lower still—and the bright vision of our early years passes into the common light of commonplace day.

So, too, when our souls have been stirred to deeper thoughts of Religion. When, overwhelmed by His love and drawn by His goodness, we have taken Christ to be our Master and Guide; or when for the first time we have partaken of the Holy Sacrament and, before the eyes of all, have thus taken our place in the Army of the Church; with what holy thoughts, with what earnest resolves after goodness, have not our hearts been fired! And now, when we ask where is the fruit of all this; have we fought the battle for which we girded on the sword so bravely—have we endured the discipline for which we so ardently longed—have we kept the faith we so deeply vowed? Alas! my brethren, is there one of us who can do other than repeat the sad words of the prophet—"We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."

In the vision of the great Italian poet, Dante, he sees the crowd of perished souls swept on before him, like withered leaves before the autumn winds. And so, too, in the poem of our own great Milton, he sees the evil angels lying

"Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
In Vallombrosa."

And are not these withered leaves, in their number as well as in their decay, fit types of our own perished hopes and unfulfilled aspirations? Yes, my brethren, if we have any moral susceptibility at all, if we have any love and reverence for goodness, if we have any devotion to Christ, the thought of the past must provoke from all our hearts the confession of the prophet—"We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."

But, in the second place, the fading leaf of the text and

the season is a symbol to us of the fleeting character of our earthly possessions and circumstances.

“ The glories of our birth and state
 Are shadows, not substantial things.
 There is no armour against Fate ;
 Death lays his icy hand on kings.
 Sceptre and crown must tumble down,
 And in the dust be equal made
 With the poor crooked scythe and spade.”

To dwell on the instability of fortune, on the fleeting character of our pleasures and possessions, seems to be uttering such mere commonplaces that we are apt to go to the other extreme and to avoid the mention of these altogether. Yet nothing could be more unwise ; for those truths which are seen and acknowledged by all are just the very truths we are most apt to forget. Now it is one of the chief lessons of Religion to teach us this, and no preacher is doing his duty if the fear of uttering commonplaces keeps him from reminding his hearers of such an essential fact. We are not, my brethren, truly religious, we have not got the true spirit of Christ, till we learn to “ sit loose,” as the phrase is, to all the outward goods, possessions, and pleasures of life. Youth and health, wealth and comfort, the civilities and pleasures of life, these we must not despise nor undervalue, they are good while they last, and they may be made really valuable if used in a Christian spirit ; but we must learn to look on them as but fleeting and temporary benefits—they may be ours for a longer or shorter time, but they cannot be ours for ever—and they are not the real goods of life. When men are erecting a building they put up a scaffolding to enable them to get at the walls ; but the scaffolding, I need hardly tell you, exists for the sake of the building and for that alone, and when once the building is finished it is taken down. Now, what would you think of the builder who should be so engrossed with his scaffolding that he should almost forget his building ; who should give only the poorest material and the least time to his building,

but who should lavish all his wealth and energy upon the scaffold, making it of the choicest materials, and constructing it, as if it, and not the building, were to stand for ever? And yet, my brethren, if my parable has been right, should we not say to each of ourselves—"Thou art the man"? For we are here each of us at the beginning of an endless existence—and our present life is but the first act, the prelude to the drama of an unending being—and we are writing now simply the first page in a book whose leaves are so numerous as to defy all computation. What we shall carry with us into the next life, what shall defy the shock and change of death—that, and that alone, we should esteem the chief good of life, and the supreme object of desire. Our character, our disposition, our spirit—that innermost thing we call ourselves—that is the building we are all erecting, and it is a building which shall stand for ever; it is as the house of God, "eternal in the heavens," no accident can touch it, no change can reach it, even the supreme catastrophe of death cannot so much as shake it. The outward goods and possessions of life are, at best, but the scaffolding, by means of which we raise and lay the stones on our inward character and being. Yet to how many of us is not the scaffolding everything and the building nothing? Our health, our comfort, our wealth, our business, our pleasures—are not these everything, or almost everything, to us? We estimate our progress, our success, our advancement in life, by these alone. And yet the building that alone shall stand for ever is not in any, or in all of these; it is in piety, in purity, in kindness, in the conquest of evil habits, and the dominion over wrong desires, in trust and love to God, in love and helpfulness to man. Yes, my brethren, not of the wealthy and comfortable alone, but of all of us, is it true that—

"The world is too much with us; late and soon
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."

It is not that the world should be nothing to us, but that we make it everything; and so it should be the unceasing

office of the Christian preacher to reiterate the words of the Apostle—"Use the world, but do not abuse it" (or, as the words should be rendered, "do not use it to the full,"), "for" (and this is surely sufficient reason) "the fashion of this world passeth away." Yes, my brethren, this is the lesson you may read on everything your eyes have ever seen, or your hands have ever touched; they all re-echo the same song, and its burden ever is—"Passing, passing away." It is the same lesson which the withered leaves of the text and the time have to tell us. A few months ago and in the whole world of Nature what was brighter or fresher than these? How high they waved over our heads, as things too lofty ever to be trailed and crushed on the soiling earth! The gentle winds of summer played with them; the birds built their nests beside them, and over them they sang their songs. And now, stripped from every tree by ruthless winds, they are not only brought low as the ground, but they become a part of the common clay, and already almost every trace of them is gone for ever.

But if the leaves wither and pass away, so do what we consider the more enduring possessions of life; and money, the often-esteemed supreme good, has by one great living poet been symbolized in the scattered leaves—

"A vast speculation had failed,
And ever he muttered, and maddened, and ever he wanned with
despair,
And out he walked when the wind like a broken worldling
wailed,
And the flying gold of the ruined woodlands drove thro' the air."

But, my brethren, every outward possession, every pleasure which rests upon outward things, must decay and pass away, for all that is material can only be for a time. In the sight of Him to whom a thousand years are but as a day, nay, in the sight of ourselves, as immortal beings, the proudest and most enduring monument man can rear is fragile and falling as the fading leaf.

“The cloud-capp’d towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like an insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind.”

Yes—

“The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and Nature sink in years;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth
Unhurt amid the war of elements, the wreck of matter,
And the crash of worlds.”

“We all”—in our possessions and outward life—“do fade as a leaf;” it is only in our spiritual nature and attainments that “our leaf fadeth not, and whatsoever we do shall prosper and endure for ever.”

But there is yet another lesson for us in the fading leaf. Not only is it the symbol of our possessions, it is also the symbol of ourselves; all that is ours fades and perishes, but we also “do all fade as a leaf.”

My brethren, here again, I am afraid, I shall incur the charge of uttering a mere commonplace, for what truth is so widely acknowledged, or so patent to all, as that we must all die? And yet it is a truth which none of us almost ever voluntarily recalls, and when it comes on us unbidden, we treat it as an unwelcome guest, whom we must get rid of with all possible quickness.

At Egyptian feasts they had a custom of presenting a mummy before the guests, that the sight might guard them from excess of pleasure, by reminding them that death, too, awaited them; and among the Romans, when a general was riding in triumph up to the Capitol, and the procession was winding along, and the crowd were shouting in his honour, a slave stood behind him in his chariot, whispering ever and anon the words, “Remember, thou too art mortal.”

These examples should show us that it is neither a useless nor an unnecessary task to remind ourselves of our mortality, for as an acute writer has well said—

“All men think all men mortal but themselves.”

Let us then, my brethren, make these withered leaves each Autumn strews around us what the mummy was to the Egyptian guest and the slave to the Roman general. They, too, whisper to us, "Remember, thou too art mortal," and their message to us is, "You all do fade as a leaf."

Some leaves hang on to the tree on even to the next Spring, and some men live for a long time even after they have reached old age. But it is none the less true that all leaves fade, and all men die. In the very oldest poem in the world we find the same comparison—

"The generations are
As of the leaves so also of mankind ;
As the leaves fall, now withering in the wind,
And others are put forth, and Spring descends,
Such on the earth, the race of men we find ;
Each in his order, a set time attends,—
One generation rises, and another ends."

(Homer, translated by Worsley.)

But, my brethren, there is one point in which the comparison utterly fails; and, in place of a likeness, we have a contrast. Leaves do not fail and wither in Spring, but even the youngest and strongest may die,—

"Leaves have their time to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set, but all,
Thou hast *all* seasons for thine own, O Death !"

The time of our end is unknown, but however long-delayed it may be, it is surely coming. A few years, and all of us will have passed away from this present scene; and it will be as idle to ask for a survivor as to enquire in Summer for the snows of Winter, or the leaves of the former Autumn. This is a rule to which there is no exception—"We *all* do fade as a leaf."

My brethren, I have spoken, as I felt it my duty to do, and as the text has instructed me, on the failure of our resolves, the fleetingness of our possessions, the frailty of our lives; but I do not wish you to derive from thence the lesson simply that "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The Christian preacher has forgotten his office if he ever preaches despair. He is, and ought to be, a preacher of the Gospel; and that word, I need hardly tell you, means "good news,"—hope, not despair. Therefore, my brethren, if in the past we are all of us conscious of having failed in goodness, let us resolve to be more earnest in the future; and the greater our failure has been then the greater let our earnestness be. It was nobly said by the great St. Augustine (whose own life bore testimony to the truth of his words) "We may make of our past failures and sins a ladder by which to rise to future holiness and goodness."

And if all our earthly possessions and desires are fading and fleeting, have we not a treasure beyond the reach of Time, which neither moth nor rust corrupteth, and which no thief can ever steal? I have read somewhere that a mother who was jealous for the love of an only child, would give him when from home simply the poorest playthings and pleasures, that he might love all the more the costly and lasting delights of his own home. And God has made all earthly possessions fading and poor, only that His child whom he loves—man, whom he has redeemed—may learn to say, "O my Father, all these things fail to satisfy me; they perish in the using; be Thou my lasting Treasure, the Strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

Yes, brethren, even the fading leaf, which I have used as the symbol of decay, is rightly regarded as a type of hope. For it does not really die; it decays only to the outward sense. Every particle of the leaf lives on, and could we only follow it with our eyes, as we can do with our science, that dead and withered thing which we trample under foot, we shall find again becoming part of a living tree, and sharing in the beauty and joy of Spring. And so it is with hope not despair. We pronounce the words, "We all do fade as a leaf," for, like the leaf, we change, but we cannot die.

"There is no death! what seems so is transition.
 'This life of mortal breath
 Is but a suburb of the life Elysian,
 Whose portal we call Death."

Yes, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." In His name we can dare to use the words of the Christian poet, when we feel the shrivelling wind of Death on our beloved ones or on ourselves—

"Take them, O Death! and bear away
Whatever thou canst call thine own!
Thine image stamped upon the clay,
Doth give thee that, but that alone!

"Take them, O Grave! and let them lie
Folded within thy narrow shelves,
As garments by the soul laid by,
And precious only to ourselves.

"Take them, O Great Eternity!
Our little life is but a gust
That bends the branches of thy tree,
And trails its blossoms in the dust!"

The following interesting extract from the Minutes of the Presbytery of Chirnside, which includes the Parish of Foulden, sent to Mr. Douglas' mother, was forwarded while the book was going through the press—

“ At Chirnside, the twenty-sixth day of April,
eighteen hundred and eighty-seven years,
which day the Presbytery of Chirnside being
met and constituted, *inter alia*,

“ Mr. Dobie submitted the Minute prepared by his Committee relative to the late Rev. J. D. Douglas, which was approved of, and ordered to be engrossed; and the Clerk was also instructed to send a copy of the Minute to the mother of Mr. Douglas. The Minute is as follows:—‘ The Presbytery of Chirnside desire to record their deep sorrow at the early death of the Reverend John D. Douglas, minister at Bellahouston, in the Presbytery of Glasgow, who had so recently left the bounds of this Presbytery in the apparent enjoyment of full health, and with the prospect of a hearty welcome by the members of his new charge. The Presbytery very soon recognised in Mr. Douglas a young man of much promise—of good natural abilities, which he had carefully cultivated. He was well read in Philosophy and General Literature, and he combined with an accurate knowledge of Church affairs considerable power and great fairness in debate. These qualifications he devoted with much success, during his short career as an ordained minister, to the promotion of the highest interests of the Church of Scotland, and also to the spiritual well-being of the congregation of the Parish of Foulden, among whom he laboured with much acceptance for a very few years. The Presbytery would also give expression to their belief, which is shared in by others, that Mr. Douglas, while forward in announcing his own opinions when occasion required, was most tolerant of others; and, further, that in his inner life he was, though comparatively young in years, full of faith in his ever-living and loving Redeemer.

“ ‘The Presbytery would also express their deep sympathy with his mother in her sudden and very sad bereavement, and unite in the prayer that the God of all Grace may be her stay and staff through life.’

“Extracted on this and the two preceding pages, from the Records of the Presbytery of Chirnside, by

“ J. A. ROBERTSON,
“ *Presbytery Clerk.*”

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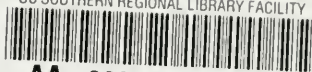


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